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(R&D Rep. No. 8023)

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Abstract

This report focuses on the issue of how constraints of the school environment and teachers' beliefs about teaching influence classroom performance. Case studies of three teachers in two schools (one in a rural, the other an urban district) are presented. Objective characteristics of the school settings (e.g., patterns of material and physical resource distribution) are described in detail. The classrooms of the teachers, and their explanations and justifications of their practices, are then examined. The report concludes by summarizing the patterns of resource distribution operating in the two schools and districts and examining the teachers' beliefs about teaching as forms of "commitments" to different definition of teachers. Commitments are then explained in terms of the interaction of organizational control patterns and teachers' strategies of adaptation to organizational settings. The central theme of the analysis is that teachers' classroom performances are not shaped by the independent influences of contextual constraints and beliefs and intentions, but are instead shaped by the interaction of beliefs and constraints.

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THE INTERACTION OF SCHOOL CONTEXT AND TEACHERS' BELIEFS

This report addresses a relatively neglected issue in research on teaching: the way in which school and community environments, and teachers' subjective interpretations of them, influence teachers' beliefs about teaching and their classroom practices. The report takes the form of descriptive case studies of three teachers in two schools. The schools, two junior highs (one in an urban, the other a rural school district), are described in terms of their patterns of resource distribution and social organization. The report then examines how the teachers subjectively interpreted these environments and used their interpretations to justify and guide their classroom behaviors.

The focus on teachers' subjective interpretations of their environments stems from two considerations. First, research from a variety of perspectives has demonstrated that "objective" constraints originating outside the classroom are important influences on classroom instruction (e.g., Ball, 1981; Barr & Dreeben, 1983; Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Pease, 1983; Schwille, Porter, & Gant, 1979; Sieber, 1978). At the same time, this and other research (e.g., Lipsky, 1980) suggests that objective constraints are not imposed in a mechanistic fashion but are instead mediated and modified at the "street-level" to produce a very heterogeneous and inconsistent array of effects. Some forms of constraints and pressures may be exerted only intermittantly, as organizations and actors respond to transient problems or crises. Constraints may also be distributed unequally among different levels of school organizations. Aspects of the environment that can be manipulated and negotiated at one level of the school may become objective and nonnegotiable for personnel at lower levels in the school hierarchy. Finally, objective constraints may have different influences on personnel at the same level of an

organization (e.g., because of differences in the social skills, commitments, and interests of the organizational participants).

The implication of this variability in the effects of context is that teachers working in the "same" objective context can be differentially influenced by it. This paper argues that one key to understanding how such differential effects are produced can be found in the subjective understandings and accomodative strategies that teachers develop to make sense of and survive in their schools.

It can also be argued that understanding the differential effects of the "same" context will enable us to better understanding how contextual effects operate in general. It is a commonplace finding in, for example, studies of teacher induction, that institutional and contextual factors are important determinants of teaching practice, but a conceptualization of how contextual influences operate has remained elusive. The image conveyed in the research is of each teacher's experience as unique and idiosyncratic. As Zeichner (1983) puts it, the research suggests that:

> Beginning teachers (with varying levels of skills and personal resources) interact with school contexts (which differ in terms of the constraints and opportunities they present to beginners) in ways that make the process of becoming a teacher a "riddle" to be solved somewhat differently in each instance. (pp. 33-34)

One way to address the problem of conceptualizing these processes is to distinguish between the objective and subjective components of contexts and to analyze the processes linking them. Just as Cole and his colleagues (Cole, Griffin, Newman, Petitto, & Quinsaat, 1983) went about examining the influence of psychological tasks on learning by examining how the "same" tasks were differentiated by the psychological characteristics of students and the social-interaction settings in which students confronted the tasks, so understanding the influence of context on teaching practice requires an

investigation of the social and psychological processes through which objective context is subjectively mediated.

It is also important to understand how objective constraints are distributed in organizational settings. Research framed in terms of a single level of analysis can reveal a structure for the component units of analysis at that level, but it cannot specify which combinations or relationships of units are determined solely at that level of analysis and which are determined or constrained by processes at other levels of analysis. For example, it may be possible to "explain" teachers' actions in terms of, say, the constraints of the classroom ecology or the predispositions engendered by their belief systems--but ecological constraints and belief systems may themselves be the products of constraints and pressures originating at other levels of context. If such linkages are ignored, a complete understanding of the processes in question cannot be attained, and attempts to intervene in them may be doomed to failure, and at the least are likely to have unanticipated and undesired consequences.

The present report represents a modest attempt to examine some of the mechanisms through which different levels of context interact. The research asks how teachers understand the constraints of their work settings and accommodate to these constraints. To pursue these questions entails investigating the objective characteristics of the schools in which the teachers work; and the factors influencing the way the teachers interpret context.

Methods and Sample

The research reported in this paper focused on eight experienced teachers--two each in the subject matter areas of eighth grade English, eighth grade mathematics, eighth grade American history, and seventh grade Texas history. These teachers were observed and videotaped, usually once a week,

for approximately 12 weeks. Narrative descriptions of the classrooms were constructed, using the videotapes to insure comprehensiveness and to provide verbatim accounts of classroom discourse. The videotapes were also used to conduct four "stimulated recall" interviews with each teacher. In these interviews the teachers were asked to watch the tapes of their classrooms and to explain their goals, thoughts, or decisions at particular points in the class session. Four extensive, relatively unstructured interviews were also conducted with each teacher. These interviews focused on the teachers' backgrounds, careers, and general views and beliefs about teaching; on their perceptions of the students in the classes observed; on their views about the nature and sources of discipline problems; and on the administrative and community influences that they felt affected their classroom practice. Extensive interviews were also conducted with the principals and vice-principals at the schools studied.

In an effort to gain a better understanding of the possible influences of school context on teachers' beliefs and practices, teachers in three contrasting school settings were studied. One school, which we will call Countryside[1], was the sole junior high in a small rural community, in a resource-poor school district. Teacher turnover was high and the teachers were not organized. A second school, Cityside, was one of ten junior highs in a more affluent urban district, with a relatively stable and organized teacher population. Due to court-ordered desegregation policies in the district, this school served three geographically dispersed segments of the community. A third school, Middleburg, occupied an intermediate position between the other two

[1] All of the counties, cities, schools and school personnel mentioned in this paper are referred to by pseudonyms.

schools: Located on the outskirts of an urban center, it drew students from both rural and urban areas and shared characteristics of both of those settings. This site is not discussed in this report, in part because of space limitations, but also because it had characteristics (e.g., proximity to a large military base, from which it drew a large segment of its student body) which make it an anomalous case for this type of analysis.

The remainder of this paper is an attempt to illustrate some of the complexities of contextual influences on teaching, and to show the importance of taking into account teachers' subjective mediations of context. For purposes of exposition, only three teachers will be discussed: two history teachers from the rural school, Countryside (to illustrate different strategies of accommodation to the same context), and a history teacher from the urban school, Cityside (to illustrate accommodation strategies in a very different type of district and school setting). This subsample was selected because it allowed the contrasting of teachers in the same subject-matter areas both within schools and across schools. Because the participating teachers were volunteers we were unable to completely control which subject matter areas would be represented in the total sample (although participation was restricted to teachers in "core" content areas--teachers of electives were not considered). History was the only subject matter area allowing the desired comparisons. It may be argued that teachers in different content areas are influenced in different ways by contextual factors. This is undoubtedly true. Math teachers, for example felt much more pressure from standardized testing and the presence or lack of ability grouping than did the history teachers. In fact, history teachers were probably much less affected by contextual influences than teachers in other content areas, since, for

example, student performance was much less easily monitored by administrators than in subject areas such as English or math.

A key aim of the paper is to present an "interactive" analysis showing how factors in the general school context influence patterns of action at the organizational and classroom levels. Thus, considerable attention is devoted to describing characteristics of the "objective" contexts of the schools in which these teachers operated, along with some of the subjective interpretations of those contexts by the entire sample of teachers and administrators. In the general descriptions of the schools, then, data are drawn from the entire sample, not just the three teachers focused on.

Countryside School

Social and Economic Characteristics of the School's Environment

Countryside was the only junior high (grades 6-8) in its mainly rural school district. The district itself served a population of around 11,000, enrolling approximately 2,500 students in grades 1-12. All of the schools in the district were located in the town of Dewey (population approximately 3,800), which was about 45 minutes by car away from Horton, a large urban center in another county (the site of Cityside school, described in a later section).

During the 1970s, the Countryside district underwent a rapid increase in population. Between 1960 and 1970 the population of the county had grown by only 2%. In the decade of the 1970s it grew by almost 43%. The population of Dewey, which increased only 4% in the 1960s, shot up by 22% in the 1970s. According to 1980 Census figures, the population of the entire county was around 25,000: 70% of the population was Anglo, 17% was Black, and 13% was Mexican-American.

Much of the growth described above is actually a reflection of the rapid growth of the nearby city of Horton, and the movement of people working in

that city to homes in Cityside's county. Indeed, Dewey depended on Morton for many of the jobs for its citizens. Aside from agriculture, there was little business or industry in Cityside's area. According to a state industrial commission survey, for example, the town of Dewey had only 9 employers of 10 or more workers. Of these nine, five--accounting for about 85% of the workers employed in the town--were public agencies at the federal, state or local level (the school district is the largest single employer). As one teacher put it:

> Most of the people go to Morton [to work]. The majority of the people don't work in Dewey; there's not that much business in Dewey. The people that are in Dewey are businessmen and merchants. There's a lot of farming that goes on around here, and ranching. That's about it.

The employment situation probably differs for the different ethnic groups in the community. Many of the Anglos in the community commute to Morton for jobs, while members of minority groups remain in the town, in traditional occupations. As one teacher put it:

> Right here in the city of Dewey, it seems that there is nothing to do, so the younger people, when they grow up, leave and move away. The only ones that stay around [are] some of the lower, poor Blacks that didn't get an education. . .
>
> Interviewer: What kind of jobs do they have, what do they do?
>
> Well, most of them, if they're not in construction in Morton. . . work for the [school] district, a few [work] for the city, a few for the county, and the rest of them [are] probably still doing menial [work]--maid and yard work here in the city of Dewey.

Median family income in the county is around $12,500, but few individuals make salaries in that range from jobs located in the county. An administrator at Countryside, while noting that he made $7,000 to $8,000 less than he would in a comparable position in Morton, pointed out that in Dewey:

> The school administrator's probably right up there with the higher-paid people in the community. For example, my secretary makes $12,000 a year. There isn't a secretary in Dewey that makes

> $12,000 a year besides those in the school. They're gonna make $7,000 a year. So the school people are considered very highly-paid people by the whole community.

Both administrators and teachers made the point that many people in the district were poor (basing this on such factors as the number of students eligible for the free-lunch program). Census figures show that almost 18% of the people in the county have incomes below the poverty level. This fugure is much higher for Blacks (37%) and Mexican-Americans (32%) than for Anglos (11%).

Educational attainment in the county is also relatively low. Only 49% of the population over 25 had graduated from high school, according to Census figures. School administrators suggested that the percentage was much lower for members of ethnic minority groups.

The depressed economic and educational characteristics of the community were matters of concern to administrators and teachers at Countryside. Most felt that parents in the community had low educational aspirations for their children. As one teacher put it:

> A big majority of the students do not go any farther than high school. They have no intention of going any farther. School is something they have to finish, but once they're done, that's it. That's what I gather from a prominant person in the community. She's also a teacher and she . . . said that she hated almost living here in the community because she wanted her kids to be exposed to Morton living. She said she'd let the kids know that there are people in this world who want to go places and go somewhere and do something bigger and better. And she said there's so much apathy here in the community, that [the attitude is] "Well, high school is all the education we need."

According to another teacher:

> The majority of them [the parents] just want them to get through high school. Now, we have about 40% that are seeing college as a definite goal, but I think that 60% of them are just hoping to get them through high school. And some of that 60% are just hoping to get them through junior high. I had a parent conference this week where the daddy said, "If he doesn't shape up in ninth grade, that's his last year." So he'll have an eighth-grade education.

The teachers and administrators interviewed in this study asserted that raising the educational aspirations of the students was a major priority that they shared with the school board and superintendent. There were, however, some impediments to the attainment of this goal--most importantly, a lack of money in the school district.

Economic Constaints

As one of the administrators at Countryside explained, "We're the lowest tax district anywhere around . . . you know, these conservative farming communities, they're just not willing to raise those taxes in order to pay teachers." The seven member school board--all Anglo male businessmen (a teacher described them as the town's "upper class")--is indeed conservative, at least in money matters. This created pressures in two areas of the school: The low salary scale made it difficult to attract a stable faculty, and the low appropriations for the school led to shortages in space, materials, and resource personnel.

Teacher pay and teacher turnover. Until the arrival of a new superintendent 3 years earlier, teachers' salaries had been fixed at a base level set by the state (around $11,000). Beginning teachers still receive this rate, but teachers now receive a raise to 2% above the state base after a year in the district. The highest any teacher can receive is 4% above the base. One teacher calls this "chicken feed." "If I was to divorce my husband today, I could never make it on my salary alone, I couldn't do it," adds another. As Mrs. Marsh, one of the teachers discussed later, put it:

> People that have stayed here and are staying here are in teaching as a hobby, because it doesn't pay enough to be a profession. So they're in it because they love what they're doing, they enjoy what they're doing. But they're not in it to really make a living.

Apparently, many of the teachers at Countryside are not in teaching as a "hobby." Teacher turnover is endemic at the school. According to one teacher, "We start off with almost a brand new staff every year. In the seventh grade last year, we only had one returning teacher." As a school administrator explained:

> You have a very big turnover with teachers on a regular basis, because if they can get into the Morton system, they're gonna make more money, and some of them are already traveling from Morton. So they cut out their travel expenses, plus they make more money.

In the words of one teacher:

> They don't do nothing but train teachers here . . . every person that comes here, if he's living in Morton, what he does he comes here and works until he can get him a job in Morton . . . I imagine that we're gonna turn over in this school over half of the people next year. The only ones t' at will stay here are the people that live here . . . Morton pays better . . . and then if someone got to subsidize their work, they've gotta work the other job, so they be close in Morton, they're not gonna live down here. A lot of the young teachers, they work at [department stores] and other places on weekends . . . it just doesn't have much to offer, unless the person comes down here is gonna decide to make this his home. . . . So most of the people will be turning over, they'll be leaving just as soon as they can get a job someplace else.

As the quote suggests, the city of Morton has a symbiotic relationship with outlying school districts, hiring few if any beginning teachers and instead drawing good, experienced teachers from the surrounding areas. Schools such as Countryside, by contrast, employ many new, inexperienced teachers. As the principal of Countryside explained:

> We train 'em and Morton hires 'em . . . Morton does not have to hire unexperienced teachers. But just as soon as we get one in here that is top-notch, Morton finds it out, then they hire 'em away from us, 'cause they're no longer that beginning teacher. They're an experienced person that has done an outstanding job in Dewey or [he names several other small communities near Morton] . . . it probably slows down your . . . improving of education . . . Occasionally in a town this size--it's getting better--but you have to hire when August the 20th come, you have to hire just somebody and we've done that to have a body in there, because they will not let you have funding to hire a substitute teacher. I've got some substitute teachers that do not have college that's better teachers than some people that are certified, but you can't get funding for that.

Other teachers echoed the view that most of the good teachers were quickly hired away by larger, better-paying school districts. One teacher complained that:

> We seem to hire . . . the first person that comes along and says "I am qualified," we seem to take them. We're not choosey and it's because we cannot afford to be choosey . . . we don't pay enough to be choosey. . . . But if we got a good person, they're usually gone within two years because they get paid more some place else . . . we lose a lot of good people that way.

The school board gave hiring preference to people living in the community (on the assumption that they would be less likely to leave for a better-paying district), but it was still the case that a considerable proportion of the faculty lived in Morton or one of the other towns in the county and commuted to work at Countryside.

The high turnover of teachers may have inspired or reinforced a conservative attitude among School Board members. One teacher suggested that the Board was reluctant to buy new materials (e.g., textbooks, workbooks, etc.), introduce new programs or any other sorts of innovations because of uncertainty about the identity of the school personnel who would be around to implement the new designs. Apparently, at some time in the past, energetic teachers who had convinced the Board to invest in new programs had left the school before the innovations were in place:

> It's very hard for a new teacher to come in here with all these innovative ideas . . . you get all these ideas and look, next year [the teacher's] gone. Well, when you do the board like that one or two times . . . they get a little leery of anybody else that comes in with a lot of new ideas.

The teacher pay issue thus seems to be a component in a vicious cycle: The low pay and scarce resources drive the better teachers away from Countryside, while the lack of a stable and cohesive faculty makes the School Board reluctant to raise salaries or experiment with innovations. I shall argue later that one response of the district has

been to adopt a selection process aimed at identifying those teachers most likely to hold conservative, "small-town" values--teachers willing to exchange pay for a more traditional school environment. First, however, other areas of resource constraint will be examined.

Scarcity of resources. The paucity of funding in the district created shortages of space, materials, and resource personnel.

Space constraints at the school took several forms. Both teachers and administrators, for example, complained that the school itself was too small. The school building was only 5 years old, but it had been designed on the assumption of a stable student population. Instead, in 5 years the junior high population grew from just under 500 to slightly over 700. As a result, classes were crowded and all of the classrooms in the school were in use every period of the day. Several teachers found that this created problems for them:

> It irritates me that I have to have so many kids. But yet I know that the district can't seem to afford it any other way. They don't have a bigger building. They don't have any more space.

> There's too many kids in that room, or there's too many seats in there and they're too close together. One kid breathes and it blows another kid's paper off the top of the desk. And it's just no way that a kid in there can turn around without affecting another one.

Teachers were generally able to manage the space problem in their classrooms--in part because the school day at Countryside was divided into seven periods (as opposed to six periods at the other schools studied), but the school was extremely noisy and the rooms almost suffocating when the ventilation system failed (as it did with regularity). Moreover, because classrooms were in use each period, the teachers had no private area to use during their planning periods and were forced to use the small and generally crowded teachers' lounge.

Materials were another sort of item in short supply at Countryside. One teacher recounted that the school had run out of paper during testing time the previous year. As a result:

> We're constantly being told we're out of paper: "Don't make so many run-offs, don't make so many dittos because we're out of paper. Use more chalk-board things." You know, that can sometimes be a problem. In history sometimes you have to have run-offs . . . I don't do as many maps as possible, and I don't do as many puzzles sometimes. We skip maps, and hence I don't feel they've got the map skills they need.

Prior to the arrival of a new school administrator 3 years earlier, there had been no established procedure by which teachers were to acquire materials for their classes. At present, they receive a yearly stipend of $40.

> This is the first year I have forty dollars . . . I don't remember what it was last year.
>
> Interviewer: What if you want to buy something for your class and you need more than $40?
>
> I wanted to. I wanted to buy not just 20 copies of Where the Red Fern Grows, I wanted to buy 30. But I couldn't. He [the principal] said, "Don't even ask, because you won't get it. You ask for exactly $40, because that's all you're going to get." And I wanted workbooks. I get tired of running off mimeograph sheets all of the time. They need a workbook where they can practice doing this stuff. And, he said, "Don't ask for workbooks this year. [The superintendent] is not going to give anybody workbooks this year. He doesn't want to buy workbooks." I don't understand that.

A lack of resource personnel was also a problem at the school. The year this study was conducted was the first in which Countryside had had a fulltime counselor. The previous year the counselor had been at the school halftime. Before that, there had been no counselor. Even with a fulltime counselor (for a school with over 700 pupils) the availability of counseling may not have been adequate. For example, the school had no records clerk and the counselor was forced to take over the functions that such a clerk would have performed. The teachers were responsible for

filling in grades on students' permanent records because of the lack of clerical personnel.

The district also lacked a curriculum coordinator. One teacher, who had worked in the more affluent Morton school district, compared his experiences at Countryside with those at Morton:

> This district's far behind because you don't have the resource people that you can go to to get additional help in social studies or math or any area. In Morton, almost in every subject matter, you got curriculum specialists that you could call to bring in to reinforce whatever you were doing . . . Those people would come in and help you out.

Teachers could, if they felt they were dealing with students unable to "function" academically, refer those student to "Special Services" for evaluation, but:

> When you do that there's about six pages of paperwork you have to fill out, and it's detailed. It's gory. Nobody want's to go through that, so very few kids actually do get referred. It's such a hassle to the teacher.

Even referring the student seemed to bring no guarantee that action would result. According to another teacher:

> We can fill out a referral, but you probably won't hear anymore of it . . . In the county there's a person running around that's supposed [to take care of it.] But you don't see him, you don't know where he is or how to get in touch with him.
>
> Interviewer: You've never met him, in three years?
>
> Never met him. You've got a lot of kids here that are mainstream that probably should be in some remedial classes, like in special education, that have been looked over. [There is a lack of] . . . people for diagnosing these kids and quickly assessing their needs. . . .
>
> In an area like this when you've got so many people [on the School Board] that's not associated with education, it's very hard to convince a farmer or rancher out here that you would need somebody just sitting in an office and looking at people's papers and saying, "This is what this kid needs." He says, "Well, I didn't have one when I was in school and I made it." . . . It's pretty hard to convince him that you would need, say, a counselor or a diagnostician to sit and do these things that I'm talking about.

The teachers did have access, in theory, to a regional educational service center located in Morton, but some teachers found it difficult to use the center: "It's very inconvenient. By the time I get out of school and by the time I would get there, it would be closed." The main use of the service center seems to have been by teachers ordering films. It was possible for the school to request that someone from the service center come to Countryside and present a workshop on a particular issue, but according to a administrator, the school's experience with such workshops has not been a good one:

> My complaint about the service center is that they don't always send a specialist. He thinks he's a specialist or she does, maybe. Or maybe they just got a request and said, "Well, Sally Jane, they need somebody in Dewey so go down and put 'em on a workshop."

The teachers were required, by state law, to spend a minimum number of days each year in inservice training. The district could require more inservice days, but this was not the case at Countryside. The teachers could attend in-service seminars over the summer (for example, at the regional service center) and seminars were offered by the school in the week prior to the beginning of the school year. During these preschool sessions teachers who had attended summar seminars were sometimes asked to present to the other faculty what they'd learned. Most of the teachers reported finding the inservice training valuable--the summer seminars much more so than those offered just before the beginning of school.

School Organization

Some of the constraints on physical and human resources arising from the characteristics of the community and district have been described. This section focuses on constraints arising from the organization of the school itself. In this respect, several issues stand out: ability grouping, curriculum design and textbook selection, and teacher hiring and evaluation practices.

Ability grouping. A common and strong complaint from all three eighth grade teachers interviewed at Countryside was that they had difficulty dealing with the very heterogeneous ability levels of the students in their classrooms.

> Two years ago I had a girl on the 12th-grade level in the same class with a girl on a third-grade level. Now, how do I teach? What do I aim for? I aim for the middle and I lose both ends. I could pull the advanced girl up and put her on contract, but there is no way that I can work with the low-level child when she's that low. Yet, she was in a regular class.
>
> I just see that it [homogeneous grouping] is very beneficial for the teacher and the student, and I could be wrong, but then again, I don't think I am. I think I'm right. I think it just really works better.
>
> I mean, it used to be, "Oh, don't, the poor kids. When you start classifying them, they realize they're classified and they realize that they're a poor student. It makes it worse." Okay, I've read about the studies where they told this class, you know, they regrouped them as, "Well, you're the slow group. You're the fast group." You know, and the slow group naturally, even though that wasn't true, progressed slower and the fast group progressed faster. And I've read all that stuff. But the kids know when they're slower. The kids know when they're having trouble in something.
>
> These kids are poor readers, I mean, really pitiful readers when you get to oral reading. Their comprehension is not good. You can't say, "Go home and read this on your own." I've thought of taping reading sections and doing small groups, like individualized instruction, but our Superintendent is not open to individualization. He's not open to homogeneous grouping. Neither is our principal.

The reasons for the administrative resistence to homogeneous ability grouping appear to be complex, though some of the teachers complained that no explanations were ever provided: "He [the principal] won't explain it. He really won't discuss it." When interviewed, however, the principal provided a number of reasons. First, it appeared that students had been grouped by ability 5 or 6 years earlier, but that this practice had gotten the school into some trouble. As the principal explained:

> I've tried to go into grouping . . . and H.E.W. [The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare] got me. . . . They just came for a visit, and they go down and they check and, unfortunately, when you go to grouping in a town with ethnic groups in it, you're gonna walk

> into a room with 90% minority when the population [of the town] is 80% Anglo.

A second reason for the resistence to grouping appeared to be the principal's desire to keep his level of staffing at a minimum: "I'm a firm believer [that] as long as you can keep everybody with one teacher, that's when you get a true picture of what's going on." The year in which this research was carried out was the first in which there had been more than one teacher per subject matter area per grade level. For example, the previous year, each seventh-grade teacher had had between 210 and 220 students to deal with over six periods. Overcrowding in the classrooms was exacerbated, and the need for extra teachers was used as a rationale for re-introducing a weak form of ability grouping. As the principal explained:

> For the first time we have been able--due to increased growth--to pick up another unit [i.e., have a second teacher for a course at a grade level] and where I choose to put the unit is to take care of these lower-level kids . . . H.E.W. has relaxed and we tried to do a little better job of the grouping at the same time, and not have a room full of minority kids.

In other words, there was now usually one "overflow" class per subject matter area at each grade level. The students in these classes were "remedial" students (the determination of this status being made on the basis of teacher recommendations and test scores). However, because of scheduling constraints or other reasons (parental pressure, for example, was said to be effective in keeping children out of the remedial section), not all students "below grade level" were in the remedial classes, and the teachers' other class periods remained quite heterogeneous: All of the classes studied had students ranging from the third-grade to the 10th-grade level according to their standardized tests scores. It fact, it appeared that the creation of the remedial classes changed the situation at the school very little. For a long period, the school had had "C.V.A.E." (for "Coordinated Vocational Academic Education") courses for students who

had failed courses and been retained a number of years. The same students had been in the C.V.A.E. courses were now in the remedial courses. According to an administrator at the school, "What you find now is that our C.V.A.E. kids are in those classes [i.e., the remedial classes] where before they were simply called C.V.A.E." Thus the creation of the remedial classes reduced the number of students the teachers had to deal with (to somewhere around 170-180 students) but did little to alter the heterogeneous grouping in the classrooms.

Curriculum design and textbook selection. School and district administrators had very little influence on what was taught in Countryside. There was no curriculum coordinator or supervisor in the district, and content and instructional style were largely at the discretion of the individual teacher. There were "curriculum guides," but few teachers had seen them. As one explained:

> [Content] is all determined by me at this point. I have never seen a written [guide] . . . I suppose if I went and asked for it, I could find it and see, you know, but no one has every brought it to me and showed me and said, "This is what you're supposed to be teaching." They've given me the [textbooks] and they've said, "This is what you're supposed to be teaching from this book." So I teach all of that from these books.

Committees to revise the curriculum guides had been established in the past, apparently in response to pressures from the state level:

> It [the old curriculum guide] is a great big old cumbersome thing . . . The superintendent said he had a hard time finding it when he came . . . he finally found it, but the accreditation, from the state, they wanted it updated.

However, some teachers felt that the efforts of the curriculum committees had had little impact on school practice:

> I was on a planning committee . . . to meet special requirements from the state education agency . . . there was two teachers per campus, and we got together for 2 days. We wrote up goals and objectives. We spent a lot of time; we put a lot of effort into it, and nothing ever came of it. We look back and go, "Whatever happened to this program that we started 3

years ago?" There was supposed to have been a 2-year follow-up and a 3-year follow-up. I've asked the Superintendent's office, "Whatever happened to that program?" You get the Superintendent's secretary and she's going "I don't know, I'll get back to you." And, of course, she never does. I think it got stuck in somebody's drawer. We had 11 of these great plans and goals, and everything was set up, objectives and all of these continuums where we would know exactly what was going on from Grade 1 to Grade 12. Everybody would know what every class was supposed to cover. And, shoot, we never got any of it back, you know.

The one way in which administrators did try to take a hand in shaping the curriculum was by controlling the textbook selection process:

> We try . . . to keep the same company's textbooks from the very beginning through high school, and they're slowly getting to that. . . . For example, in reading, we'll try to use the same reading company's materials from first grade through high school if we can.

Textbooks for subject matter areas were approved first at the state level. School districts could then select from the state-approved texts. It was possible for a district to select more than one text for a grade-level subject matter area, but this had not happened in the districts we studied. Instead, a single text had been chosen and bought for use. Texts were bought only at long intervals--usually shortly after the state agency had issued its list of acceptable texts. At the district level, committees of teachers were to make recommendations for adoption to the Superintendent, but the final decisions were made by the Superintendent. With the high rate of faculty turnover at Countryside, few teachers had had a hand in selecting the books they were using, and many had no idea how textbooks were selected.

The hiring and evaluation of teachers. Hiring policies at Countryside school have already been touched upon in regard to the school's problems with teacher turnover. School principals were usually consulted before a teacher was hired, and could recommend prospective teachers for hiring, but the ultimate responsibility for hiring rested with the Superintendent of schools for the district. "He's the chief

personnel officer in the district, it's a small district," Countryside's principal explained.

It seemed that the district had certain preferences in hiring. Local people (i.e., those living in and especially those owning property in the town or outlying areas) were preferred over outsiders and commuters. As the principal explained:

> We're more and more trying to hire local people. When I came here it was not the philosophy of this district to do much hiring of local people. I was even told by the school board, "You are going to get yourself in trouble because someday you're gonna hire one that's no good--you're gonna have to fire him and then you're gonna be in trouble with the community." There is definitely that chance, but I also have a firm belief that if you are hiring qualified local people, they're gonna give their heart and soul to that job because they're part of the future of that community.

We were in fact told of a few instances in the recent past in which teachers or administrators had been given jobs or allowed to retain their jobs, either because of their standing with segments of the community, or because they "only needed 2 more years to retirement." However, as noted earlier in the paper, the school was still heavily reliant on faculty members who were not based in the community.

Another important criterion used in hiring was the teacher's attitude towards discipline. As one teacher explained:

> I know that when I was hired [about 5 years earlier], the main emphasis was can you handle class discipline--can you swat a child yourself . . . Discipline was the biggest push when I was hired on.
>
> Our principal is really strong on discipline. That's his number one stress, is always discipline. And I think that we get that shoved at us.

The importance of discipline in the relations between the community and the school will be discussed below.

Once hired, the evaluation of teachers at Countryside school seemed to follow no set procedure, as the following extract from an interview suggests:

Interviewer: How are you evaluated? Is there a standard procedure?

> I don't know, I don't know what that is. I'm wondering myself. He [the principal] has been evaluating the first- and second-year teachers and he sits around the classroom and he evaluates them and then tells them how they're doing and what they need to work on. And last year he went over the evaluation with me and I read it and he said, "Just sign here." And I kind of think that what he's going to do this year is--after 3 1/2 years he feels he knows me well enough that he doesn't really need to give me a fresh evaluation.

Other teachers acknowledged that first- and second-year teachers were the most scrutinized--they were usually observed twice a year--while teachers who had been at the school over 2 years--especially those on 2-year contracts, might be observed only in those years when their contracts came up for renewal. The way the evaluation was conducted seemed to differ for different teachers. One teacher claimed that the principal would walk in unannounced to observe, but several other teachers suggested that the main form of evaluation was for the principal to stand outside the door and listen to the noise level in the classroom. As the principal himself explained:

> I found that I can observe a teacher from the hallway and get a better picture of what they're really like than I can if I'm sitting in the classroom, and the reason for my philosophy is this: If I walk in on a teacher unannounced and sit down, they have this feeling that I'm spying and they're gonna be nervous. If I tell the teacher in advance I'm going to come then they get overly prepared so they do an excellent job, more than normal.

According to a teacher:

> For a teacher that has been here over 2 years, he really just listens to you in the hall; like he'll stand out in the hall and listen to a lesson for a few minutes. He'll come and stand in the doorway and listen for 5 or 10 minutes to the lesson, and then he'll go on. But the first-year teacher, he'll come in and spend a whole classtime in the classroom with you, and sit down in one of the chairs and take notes and listen. And then you are given a copy of his evaluation and you sign it.

There was, finally, another means by which the principal monitored and evaluated teacher performance: by listening to what members of the

community said about them. As one teacher put it: "It's funny with bad teachers, but people get to know, through [their] kids. Parents [complain], kids [complain]. After so many complaints, the administrators start looking." The principal acknowledged the use of this means of evaluation:

> Number one, I think that if the community's alert, if a teacher's not doing a good job, you will hear about it in the community. So, you need to keep your ears open for community gripes. Sometimes the gripes are legitimate, and many times they are not.

This partial reliance on the community for the evaluation of teachers raises another important aspect of the context of Countryside school: the close, informal ties between the community and school personnel.

Informal school-community ties. There was relatively little social or organizational distance between the school and the community it serves. The superintendent of schools visited the school with some frequency and took an active part in hiring faculty. School Board members were closely linked to school faculty through family, church, and social ties. School Board members had even visited the school to talk to students about school policies (e.g., about the school dress code). Teachers living in the town said that they frequently ran into their students (for example, at the main supermarket). There was little organized parent interaction with the school--the PTA played a small role in the school and few parents attended the school open house--but those teachers who lived in town had ongoing informal ties with the parents of their students. Informal pressures exerted by parents may have even had an impact on school policy. One teacher attributed the introduction of a reading program in the junior high to the efforts of parents: "We had a lot of parents complaining that their kids can't read, and I think the pressure on the school board made them change it [i.e., introduce the reading program]."

The close community-school ties can be seen in the way Countryside's policy on retaining failing students worked. In theory, a student failing more than one of the five major course areas (e.g., math, science, English, etc.) would be retained. In practice, there were some wrinkles in the process. First, even if a child failed too many classes, he could be passed to the next grade by the vote of a group of five teachers. The teachers voted at the end of the school year on whether or not to keep the kids. Second, even if all five teachers voted to retain a student, the student could be passed to the next grade at the option of the principal. Finally:

> There is this rule that we are not to record on the office grade cards a grade lower than 55. That's the minimum you are to record. If the kid has a 30, you're still supposed to put a 55 down. Well, we're giving them a break right there--if they still can't pass, they don't deserve to be passed on. And we get very angry. Why are we bothering to give tests if the front office can pass them over our say so.

According to teachers, the reasons for "placing" students (as this practice was called at Countryside) were related to the personal characteristics of the students' and their home lives:

> Grades don't seem to matter anymore. It's what is your opinion of this child, or what is his home life, and how about his mommy and daddy who broke up . . . we go by each individual child. And so this child, because his mommy and daddy were divorced last year is gonna get passed on or placed, and this child, because he has a good home life, is gonna be retained.

Obviously, this type of selection process is possible only in a context where there is little distance between school and community, and where the circumstances of a child's homelife are well known by teachers in general [2].

Another important area in which community preferences were invoked as an explanation for school policy was in the matter of corporal punishment. Paddling, according to the principal, is "demanded" by the community:

"This is a community that says, 'If our children do not behave we want them straightened out, whatever the price may be.' . . . The community [believes] in corporal punishment." The principal explained the departure of his predecessor as the result of a conflict with the community over means of discipline:

> He was a liberal and I am a conservative, and Dewey is a conservative town. Basically, I would suppose it would be the form of discipline. His method of dealing with a student--and I'm not being critical of this--if a student could not get along in a classsroom then he created a new place for that child--he might be sitting out here under a shade tree for the rest of the year--and called it "creative living" or some other type thing. Whereas, in my case, I felt--and was right--that the School Board did not approve of that, that they wanted--if it took sending that kid home, suspend him until he could shape himself up or spank him as the case may be.
>
> He really did not believe in corporal punishment. The community did believe in corporal punishment. As a matter of fact, even today you still have a situation that a parent will find out that the child got into trouble, that you spanked him, he hears the kid laughing about it and he may bring the kid back up and say, "I'm going to paddle him again 'cause you didn't paddle him enough for what he thinks it's funny." That still does take place some here. This is just an old-time community, the parents were raised that way and the grandparents were raised that way and I was raised that way.

2

This practice of "placing" students created some curious difficulties for the teachers. A week or two before the end of the school year, the principal read the names of all students who were failing over the intercom. These students went to an assembly where they were told that the teachers would soon be voting on whether or not to retain them. The aim of this practice was to reduce the likelihood of student misbehavior during the last weeks of school--in fact, according to the teachers, these students became much more cooperative and friendly in effort to ingratiate themselves with the teachers (though by that time, there was little they could do to actually improve their grades). However, the borderline students, who did not hear their names called, realized that they were not in danger of failing and began to attend to their behavior and to their school work much less. The teachers were thus forced to crack down on discipline much more towards the end of the year. According to one teacher, a coalition of faculty the previous year had banded together and put pressure on the administration to force them to make the announcement of potential failures in February instead of mid-May--so that pressure would be put on students to improve their school work rather than to merely treat the teacher well for the last 2 weeks of school. However, because most of the teachers moved to other schools over the summer (as part of the regular turnover process) the coalition fell apart and the administrators returned to their previous practice.

Community support for strong discipline policies was exemplified in several ways. When the principal was sued for abuse after paddling a child (the suit was brought with the help of Legal Aid--an outside agency), the School Board backed the principal, paying legal fees and a settlement with the student's parents. As Mr. Webb, one of the teachers discussed later and a frequent user of corporal punishment put it, the office and district really "back the teacher up":

> For example, they had a faculty meeting Wednesday this week, and one thing the superintendent brought up was you need to be a little tougher on discipline. When you hear that kind of thing, you know you got backing, you see. When you hear something like, "well you need to lighten up and be a little fairer with them," something along that line, you'd better figure things ain't too hot.

It should be noted, however, that not all teachers used corporal punishment, and one, who had been at the school some time, said paddling was used less than in the past--possibly because the turnover of faculty was bringing younger teachers from other regions of the country into the school.

When corporal punishment or other forms of discipline (e.g., making the students write essays) were used, they were usually administered by the teachers themselves at their own discretion. As one teacher put it: "A teacher should be able to administer her own swats . . . I handle my own discipline." There were school policies on discipline: for example, according to administrators, students were never to be forced to take swats. However, these policies were not closely monitored and some teachers frequently failed to follow the proper procedures: for example, many times students were given no choice in taking paddlings.

Objective Constraints Reconsidered

The preceding description attempts to lay out some of the constraints that could potentially influence teachers' actions in the classroom. As

should already be clear, these constraints are of several different orders. Some, the demographic shifts, for example, operate at a structural level beyond the direct control of any of the actors in the community. Others are created at the district level by School Board policies and decisions (e.g., those about salary scales for the teachers) who themselves operate within the constraints of running a relatively poor district in competition with the more affluent districts nearby. Other constraints are created by the superintendent (e.g., the decision not to allow homogeneous ability grouping) who operates within the constraints of knowing that governmental agencies may be monitoring his actions on this issue. The principle creates constraints (e.g., through his monitoring and evaluation procedures), but does so within the constraints of lacking control over hiring and firing decisions. Finally, all of the school actors work within the constraints presented by the "community's" values, attitudes and aspirations (or lack of aspirations).

This litany of constraints within constraints is not meant merely to convey some image of a pluralistic distribution of power. Rather, I wish to stress two points. The first is that constraints are by and large the creations of actors themselves operating in constraints created by other actors, and so on and on. As the actors or their interrelationships change or vary, so do the nature of the constraints. Constraints are thus ambiguous and uncertain over time, and unevenly and inconsistently enforced. One of the main aims of this paper is to examine some of the sources or processes which contribute to the ambiguity and change of constraints. The second point is that while these constraints are malleable for some actors, they are nonetheless "objective" and non-negotiable for others. This is obvious when we compare actors at different levels of a hierarchy of authority (e.g., superintendents

compared with principals or teachers), but it becomes an intriguing problem when we find actors at the same level of a hierarchy--actors whose authority as formally defined is identical--who experience constraints very differently form one another. This is the case for the two teachers examined in the next section of the report: Mr. Webb and Mrs. Marsh.

The Influences of Context

The preceding description of Countryside school is intended to provide a backdrop for the reader. The following discussions of Mr. Webb's and Mrs. Marsh's (both pseudonyms) classrooms show how the school context influenced the organization of instruction. It will become clear, however, that context influences teachers in very different ways.

The descriptions of instructional "repertoires" given below were developed in the following manner. The teachers were first interviewed using a modified version of the "repertory grid technique" (Munby, 1982). The teachers' task in this interview was to describe their classroom to an outsider. Interviewers' probes were limited to clarification questions. The activities which the teachers described were written on 3 x 5 cards and the teachers were asked to sort the cards into groups (the teachers could also introduce new elements--subdivide the activities written on the cards--at this stage of the interview). The teachers were then asked to explain the basis for these groupings and to compare and contrast their groups. The aim of the interview was both to acquire some idea of the activities that the teachers saw as constituting their teaching, and to gain some understanding of how these activities were conceptually linked.

A second method used to identify teachers' repertoires was stimulated recall interviewing (Clark & Peterson, in press). Here, before watching the tapes, the teachers were asked to describe in as much detail as

possible what had taken place in the classrooms during videotaping. The aim of collecting these unprompted narrative accounts, inspired in part by Loftus's (1979) findings that such accounts were more accurate, if less complete, than accounts produced through interrogation, was to acquire some notion of what events in a given class period were most salient to the teachers, that is, to discover something of how the teachers stored their classroom experiences in memory. The teachers were then interviewed using the videotapes of their classrooms, as described earlier.

In addition to these interviews, the teachers' classrooms were observed and the observation protocols were analyzed to see how much actual classroom activity could be accounted for in terms of the teachers' subjective frameworks of activities.

The techniques described above are far from perfected. One shortcoming, for example, is that while the elements of teaching repertoires can seemingly be identified with reasonable accuracy (that is, the teachers' frameworks seem to account for most of their classroom practice) and can be paradigmatically contrasted; the organization of the elements of the repertoire--their syntagmatic relationships, how they are laced together day in and day out throughout the course of the school year--is not readily apparent. More comprehensive, day-to-day observations would seem to be required. Notwithstanding such problems, the analysis does reveal much about how teachers conceptualize their practice and the contexts in which it takes place.

Mr. Webb's Repertoire

Mr. Webb was in his second year as the seventh-grade history teacher and football coach at Countryside. He had taught social studies and

coached football in a number of rural or semi-rural schools over the last 16 years, and it was in fact his coaching abilities that had gotten him hired at Countryside. The district Superintendent was a former coach who had competed against Mr. Webb when both had been head coaches at the high school level. He remembered Mr. Webb when the latter applied for the job, and hired him without consulting the principal.

This dual status of history teacher and coach is apparently not uncommon. As the Countryside principal explained, "There's always been a coach teaching history [at Countryside]." Mr. Webb himself put it this way:

> Here's the way it's done, and this is the way it's done in most school systems. They'll keep the P.E. and the history jobs open [for coaches]. I'll bet you that . . . three-fourths of the coaches are certified in history . . . They wouldn't tie up a history job with somebody wouldn't coach, nor P.E. either . . . Like there's a woman up here, and she taught American History last year. Well, they added a coach in high school [and] they just shipped her over to English and gave that American history job to the new coach.

A social studies teacher in the Morton school district explained the reason for this practice:

> Let's face it, that [social studies] is the easiest certificate to get. I mean, if you've got a P.E. certificate you've got, by law, to take so many social studies courses, and to get a second certification in social studies is real common . . . You can only have two P.E. teachers, and all the rest of the coaches--I mean when you've seven or eight assistant coaches at a high school, they gotta teach something. So they tend to be in industrial arts, drivers education, and social studies.

Mr. Webb organized his classrooms in such a way that students spent most of their time working at tasks and activities that did not, in Mr. Webb's view, require his assistance or close monitoring. His repertoire of instructional activities was introduced to the students early in the school year and did not change throughout the semester in which he was observed. This repertoire consisted of the following elements:

1) The students read the textbook aloud--each student reading two sentences and then another student reading (seating order determined who read next).

2) The oral readings were sometimes interrupted by monologues or digressions in which Mr. Webb summarized the information in the textbook or introduced information not in the text.

3) Whenever the students came to questions in the textbook, Mr. Webb would stop the oral reading, solicit volunteers or assign students to look up answers to the text questions, give them a few minutes to find the answers, and then have the students read these answers to the class (these would sometimes serve as the opportunities for teacher digressions or monologues). Only the text questions dealing with the recovery of facts from the text were used--questions asking the students to explain or offer opinions on events were not used.

4) The students were required to keep notebooks in which they wrote the text questions from the book (the same ones they had answered orally in class) and their answers.

5) The students regularly spent entire class periods drawing maps from the textbook: The students traced the maps from the books and colored them in.

6) One day a week was devoted to showing films.

7) The students were tested. The tests consisted of 20 items, usually definitions of terms or descriptions of historical personalities in one column, which the students had to match to the appropriate terms or names in a second column. The items were drawn from the text questions which the students answered in class and copied in their notebooks, and from a section

of terms and their definitions that prefaced each chapter of the textbook. On occasion, the tests were exchanged and graded in class.

Mr. Webb's classroom. For Mr. Webb, teaching is having students read aloud. As he explained:

> Now generally, how I teach class, day in and day out, as far as the actual teaching will go, I have the students read. I have them read two sentences at a time . . . each student . . . I think that's working out all right as far as the learning experience goes, because the rest of the students have to follow along in the book, so they should get the idea anyway.

The advantage of oral reading was that its public nature forced the students to stay on task:

> When you're reading like this . . . in order for them to be able to find their place they have to pay attention, you see. So I think that that is the advantage of doing it like this. The disadvantage [is that] it's questionable whether they all hear, but . . . if they're all keeping up, they should all understand it anyway.

During oral reading activities, Mr. Webb remained seated at his desk in the front of his room, rarely looking up, his eyes on the open book in front of him. He did not interrupt the readers to explain, elaborate, or foreshadow the material being covered in the text. The only exceptions to this occurred when Mr. Webb reacted to prompts or cues in the textbook. When geographical features or settlements were mentioned in the book, he would sometimes rise and point them out on a map of the state that hung at the front of the room. Mr. Webb would also stop the oral reading whenever the students came to a set of questions in the book. Individual students, or groups of students, would be assigned the responsibility of looking up the answers to the questions, would be given a few minutes to do so, and then would recite their answers (usually reading aloud from the book) to the rest of the class. This took place at every list of questions in the book, although Mr. Webb would usually assign only those questions that asked for identifications or brief descriptions. Opinion or analysis

questions were rarely assigned (although there were usually one or two with each set of questions in the book). The students were also required to write out these questions--and the answers to them from the book--in their notebooks.

Mr. Webb's only excursions into the subject matter other than reading aloud occurred when the students were going over the text questions. The following selection from field notes provides some of the typical flavor of these elaborations:

> [The students have been assigned a question asking them to "briefly describe the explorations of the following explorers." One of the explorers listed is Francisco Vasquez de Coronado.]
> When they get to Coronado, which Dennis [a student] has been assigned to look up, Dennis reads from the book. Mr. Webb then proceeds to tell a story about Coronado. He prefaces his story by telling the students that he thinks he read what he is going to tell them in their book. Even if it is there, he is going to tell it to them anyway. He then proceeds to tell them that "Coronado came along and got the word from de Vaca that there were seven cities of gold. And he runs across this Indian. This Indian they call him Turk. I don't know why they called him Turk. I do know there was a lot of wild turkeys back in those times. Whether that had anything to do with it I don't know. Turk kept saying 'a little bit further, a little bit further, a little bit further on up ahead.' And that went on for days, months, months moved into years and finally they one day just hauled off and haw! [The "haw" is accompanied by a chopping motion of the hands.] They killed that Turk. Turk had a good time leading them all over the place. That Turk probably never saw any gold." Mr. Webb goes on to say that he has been reading a book called Coronado's Children: "Probably a third or a fourth of the way through it. They talked about the gold and silver these Spanish explorers lost and most of the accounts of why they lost this Spanish gold and silver is because, for example . . . these Spanish soldiers, they had on all kinds of armor, all that stuff--they were weighted down. Trying to get away from some Indians and you're loaded down with what you call gold bullion--you had to bury your gold or bury your silver. I have read--whether this is true or not nobody has anyway of proving--but I read it anyway . . . Like Coronado you know. He's riding along and he has, say, 200 soldiers. And he takes along gold and silver to pay them, see. They may want to shoot dice or something. They can't have anything else to do with it. Anyway, those Indians get after them and they bury that gold. That stuff still hasn't been found according to the book. . . . [And then they go on to the next explorer. The story of the Turk, incidentally, is not in the textbook.]

Mr. Webb's explained that his purpose in telling such stories was to overcome what he felt to be the general perception that history was boring:

> I think that one of the common complaints you hear about history is that it's boring, you see, and I hate to hear that because to me it isn't boring, but evidently it is to other people.

With regard to his discussion of the "Turk" and Coronado's problems with the weight of gold, Mr. Webb explained that he introduced the stories because:

> Coronado was brought up in the textbook, you see. That was the decision why. In the second place, to make it more interesting. In the third place, to show that I had other interests besides just the book, you know. I thought it might be interesting to the children. The main thing, I just did it for interest. The main thing was to break the boredom. I already know that part of that story is in that book.

These stories, which generally amount to planned performance routines triggered by the content of the book, were Mr. Webb's only excursions away from the text. As he told his classes the first day of school: "In this class I will be teaching you what's in the book, okay? I'm teaching by the book." The students read aloud from the book, they traced maps from it, answered questions from it orally in class, and usually spent one or two class periods per week copying text questions and answers in their notebooks.

The text questions also served as the bases of Mr. Webb's tests. For example, the text question on Coronado asked the students to describe the explorations of the explorer. The appropriate answer--the one accepted in class--was the sentence from the book that immediately followed the first mention of Coronado: "Coronado marched through lands that are now part of Arizona, the Texas Panhandle, and central Kansas." The test over this portion of the text--like all of Mr. Webb's tests, a twenty item matching test--contained the following item to be matched to the name

"Coronado": "Explored parts of present-day Arizona, Texas Panhandle and central Kansas." In addition to having the students look up the answers to these questions in class and write them in their notebooks, Mr. Webb would spend one, sometimes two, class periods before a test going over the questions that would be on the test.

Mr. Webb explained his practices in terms of the preferences and demands of the local school administrators. These administrative influences took three forms: stated preferences of administrators; inferences on the basis of administrators' statements, and administrative preferences revealed through administrators' evaluations.

Mr. Webb explained the routinized, repetitive, textbook-based nature of his classroom in terms of administrative demands that he "drill" his students on the information in the text. As he put it:

> in this school district, they want you to drill 'em. For example, if you took each of those questions [i.e., the text questions] . . . I covered [them] at least three times. They've answered that question in their notebook, they've answered it in class, [and] I have discussed it with them.
>
> Mr. Burns, our superintendent, said to drill 'em, and I can't deny that I drill 'em, whatever they say, 'cause I do drill 'em.

Sometimes this attempt to satisfy what he perceived to be administrative preferences created problems for Mr. Webb.:

> Last year I only covered 14 chapters, and I'm hoping for 18 this year. The thing about it was, I made a bad mistake last year. The told us to drill 'em, and I made them draw every map in the first chapter [and in the first 6 weeks] I'd covered 40 pages. So this year I didn't do that. [I did] about two maps.

The emphasis on drill and repetition was also linked to inferences Mr. Webb made about administrative preferences--particularly with regard to parental pressures on the school:

> Let that parent see that "C" average on there, and they'll be out here wanting to know, "How come you're not doing a better job at teaching?" or why their kid isn't doing better. So when I give a "B," I'm really in all right: giving an average grade of a "C." I'll give a lot more "B's" than I will anything else . . . that's where my grading system's really set up . . . and I've never had a principal bother me about my grades in 16 years because they don't like those parents up here raising cain . . . and I don't look for it to change on that, ever.

Flowing out of his emphasis on "drilling" and his avoidance strategy of seeing to it that all the kids make decent grades, Mr. Webb makes it a practice to cue the students to the questions that will be on the tests:

> Those kids come along there and I tell 'em what's gonna be on the test: The most important questions in the book they need to study . . . The questions on that test are already in the book. I am rephrasing those questions, and feed it back to 'em, is what it amounts to. Now they go over it with the question one in class, once in their notebook, and once in review. So, they've heard it at least three times.

When too many students do poorly on a test, Mr. Webb gives them the same test again, with the questions rearranged:

> Nobody passed that thing in there. Fifty-five, I believe, was the highest grade in the class, so obviously, it's too hard. So I just give the test back to 'em, you know, more or less, and I didn't take the grade, gave them the same test again, had the old test to study, you see. If they can't cut that, they're too dumb to pass. . . . I thought it was a tough test, I really did, but the second time around it shouldn't have been, not with the dern questions and the answers there, and they're just rearranged, that's the only difference. Good Lord! How easy you gotta make it?

Finally, much of the way Mr. Webb conducted his class seemed to be fashioned to accommodate the system of teacher evaluation at the school. In some cases, as already suggested, evaluative statements by administrators provoked a direct response from Mr. Webb. For example, the principal complained to Mr. Webb that his classes moved too slowly and that he was not covering enough material in class. As a result, Mr. Webb cut down on the number of maps he had the students draw, and reduced the amount of time he spent preparing the students for their tests. At a more subtle level, it can be noted that the principal's primary method of

"observing" teachers was to stand outside the door and listen to the classrooms. As Mr. Webb put it:

> He can hear pretty well what's going on. If you're real quiet, are you teaching, or what are you doing. Now, he came into my room and might have spent 3 minutes this year--which I knew was alright, because they've got to spend 30 minutes in there if they're going to fire you . . . It's a state law. . .

As if geared to this evaluative system, Mr. Webb's system of monitoring the classroom relied almost completely on attending to sound, and his management system was designed to keep the general noise level down. Visual monitoring was at a minimum. During oral reading Mr. Webb kept his eyes on the book. For example, when asked during a stimulated recall interview if he felt the students had been attending to the task while reading aloud, he replied, "Yeah, I thought they did. Of course, I've got my head down looking at that book, but I'm fairly confident that they're keeping up." When the students were doing seatwork (working on their notebooks, drawing maps, taking a test) he paced the room, often stepping just outside the door (perhaps to check the noise level that the principal might hear), rarely looking at anything the students did. The students, for their part, were able to carry on constant quiet conversations with their neighbors, move around and throw things behind the teacher's back, and cheat on their tests. They were very rarely caught. The majority of Mr. Webb's desists (other than those to two boys he had singled out as troublemakers) were shouts of "quiet!" or "shut it!" directed to the entire class rather than to particular students.

It appears, then, that Mr. Webb made sense of his practice in terms of what he perceived as the expectations of school administrators. However, to gain some idea of why he may have interpreted the school

context as he did, it is necessary to examine Mr. Webb's career and to see how his present position fits into that career.

It was mentioned earlier that Mr. Webb was also a football coach. As he and other teachers explained, coaching is characterized by a high degree of mobility. Part of this derives from a dynamic created by coaches trying to move constantly into larger, better funded, and more prestigious schools, and by the schools trying to lure successful coaches into their programs. As Mr. Webb put it:

> Fellow told me one time that the only teachers had any money were the ones that stayed in the same place, but it doesn't work out that way. If you want to move up in coaching, you pretty well got to move.

Another reason behind the high rate of mobility is that coaches tend to be evaluated more on the basis of the success of their teams than on the success of their classrooms: They are frequently fired or released from their contracts. Mr. Webb, for example, was asked when he was hired if he would resign if asked to (he said that he would). The longest Mr. Webb had stayed at one school during his 16 years of teaching was 4 years. As he explained:

> Usually what they do is ask you to resign if they don't want you. I never was asked to resign over any kind of a teaching deal . . . it was more of a coaching deal. For some strange reason that just didn't work out--they didn't pay you as much to coach, but that's what they'd holler at you for.

The high rate of horizontal mobility that Mr. Webb had experienced in his career appeared to have several consequences. First, Mr. Webb did not fit well into the community--he didn't sink roots, buy a home, or attempt to join local voluntary organizations. He displayed little awareness of the community (not knowing, for example, any of the School Board members). His only contacts with the community were via football games (and meeting fathers picking up their kids at practice). Mr. Webb's

attitude towards his position at Countryside was somewhat fatalistic and he seemed to regard his position as inherently transient. "This really is a pretty good school system, it really is," he once commented, then added: "Course I'll say that, and they'll turn around and fire me sure as hell."

A second consequence of Mr. Webb's career pattern was that--because the primary reason he would be hired was for his coaching skills--he would simply be slotted into whatever teaching position he was qualified for, at whatever grade level. He had taught all grades from the seventh through the 12th, and the subject matter areas of P.E., health, world history, American history, and Texas history. The frequent shifts in subject matter areas and grade levels might explain in part his reliance on the textbook as the sole source of content. He himself complained of his lack of knowledge about the subject matter he taught:

> I wish I would have had more Texas history [in college], but you have to understand the way they'd done it in these colleges . . . to be certified to teach history [you only need] 24 hours . . . we just covered from the time the Spanish came . . . up until about 1850. As far as recent Texas history I haven't [had] a class.

This may have had something to do with Mr. Webb's assertion that the most important events in the history of Texas were the Alamo and the Battle of San Jacinto, and the fact that his class (at least the previous year) covered only the period of Texas history prior to the Civil War (though the textbook deals with events into the 20th century).

Finally, two more elements in Mr. Webb's career pattern deserve attention. One is rather straightforward: the fact that he was in his second year at Countryside, and that his contract was coming up for evaluation at the end of the year. This probably had something to do with his scrupulous attempts to abide by what he perceived to be administrative directives. A second aspect of Mr. Webb's career pattern is less obvious: This is the sort of selective affinity between schools

such as Countryside and teachers such as Mr. Webb. The emphasis on tough discipline at the school has already been mentioned. Mr. Webb, for his part, frequently compared the attitude of the school and community favorably to another school district he had worked at (where there were more restraints on paddling--something Mr. Webb attributed to the fact that his principal at that school had been a "Yankee," and that many of the students' parents--the school served an Army base--were from the North, where paddling was not an accepted form of discipline). All of his teaching experience had been in relatively small rural towns. Mr. Webb suggested many times that he would not consider working in a large city school district, although he noted that the pay in such districts would be much better. Schools like Countryside, for their part, had difficulty attracting coaches because of their low pay scales, and were thus dependent on beginning teachers and on experienced teachers who, like Mr. Webb, preferred the rural atmosphere (cf. the teachers in Becker's, 1952, study, who became accustomed to lower class schools with harsher systems of discipline).

The way Mr. Webb interpreted his context was thus influenced by his past experiences, by his teaching career. A very different sort of adaptation to and interpretation of the Countryside context--arising from a different sort of career dynamic--can be seen in Mrs. Marsh's case.

Mrs. Marsh's Repertoire

Mrs. Marsh, the eighth-grade history teacher at Countryside school, had taught for 8 years, the last 5 of them at Countryside. Mrs. Marsh is not an athletic coach, and recognizes that she may in the future be asked to move to another subject matter area in which she is certified, such as

math, in order to make room for a coach. She regards this prospect with equanimity, though she says that history is her favorite subject to teach. Mrs. Marsh has an instructional repertoire which includes the following elements:

1) Having students read from the book. The students would read one paragraph apiece (two paragraphs if they so desired). The reading followed the order of seating. Mrs. Marsh would occasionally read one or more paragraphs from the book herself.

2) Mrs. Marsh would regularly interrupt the reading to summarize what had just been read, to anticipate what would be read next, or to offer information not included in the book.

3) Mrs. Marsh would occasionally ask the students questions--usually about information they had read, but sometimes questions relating to their life experiences, which she would then try to relate to the information in the text. Infrequently (at least in the class period we observed) these would develop into general discussions.

4) Students were often given worksheets or sets of questions (sometimes drawn directly from the text) covering the material they read about in the textbook. The students would be allowed to fill in these worksheets as the class read through the text--if it was not possible to finish the worksheets in the class, the students would sometimes have to finish them as homework. These worksheets and sets of questions were kept in a notebook, along with a record of the grades they had made on them.

5) Mrs. Marsh had a number of irregularly scheduled activities: The students would sometimes read aloud history-related articles or plays from the Junior Scholastic magazine. Often, towards the end of a class period, the students would play a game in which they formed teams and attempted to guess the identities of historical personages or events on the basis of hints given

them by the teacher. The students were also required to do independent projects during the semester: These could be such activities as developing history-related board games, or putting on skits related to historical events that had been discussed in class. Mrs. Marsh would also introduce unique activities geared to special purposes--for example, spending approximately one class period going over bar graphs and working on map skills (items over which the students would be tested on their standardized tests).

6) Homework was sometimes graded in class.

7) The students were tested over what they had covered in the text. Mrs. Marsh constructed the tests and most of the items required the students to recall personages or events. The tests also included open-ended questions asking the students for their opinons on issues, or to explain the reasons for events. These usually were counted for extra credit.

Mrs. Marsh's classroom. It is clear that Mrs. Marsh utilized a much wider range of activities than Mr. Webb. However, in order to draw a clear contrast between the two teachers, Mrs. Marsh's classroom will be examined in terms of those activities that at least superficially resemble activities found in Mr. Webb's class: reading aloud and going over text-based questions in class.

Much of the time in Mrs. Marsh's classes was taken up with students reading the textbook aloud, one or two paragraphs at a time. According to Mrs. Marsh, this had not always been the case (nor was it the case that year for one of her class periods). She explained the practice as a response to the needs of her students:

> I just feel like it's necessary to read because our reading skills aren't good. If I could get back to the reading skills that I had, like 2 years ago, I had good readers . . . we could skip some reading sections. And even 3 years ago, I could say, "Read it on your own." But I can't with these kids that I have this year. I couldn't with last year's. If I said "Read it on your own," they'd laugh and slam the book shut.

I don't ever say, "read it on you own," because to me, the kids understand it when they hear it. Not as much as when they read it. Our reading comprehension level is low in our school. So, to me, it is the oral. When they hear me read it or they hear another voice reading it, and they're reading it along, then it sinks in. And too, for those who aren't paying attention, at least hearing it orally is going to perhaps trigger them later, you know, because we don't all pay attention all the time. So that will help those that have veered off and are day dreaming at the moment.

Mrs. Marsh tried to monitor the class in two ways during oral reading. First, she tried to watch the class to see that everyone was attending. However:

It's difficult because with kids that are not good readers, if I'm watching the class and not watching my book and they get to a word they cannot pronounce, then I'm in a bind to find out what word they are stumbling over. And that happens a lot, if I'm up and watching. . . . I try not to interrupt the reader with verbal things, but most of my discipline is done silently or just with eye contact. Or if I just look at them and stare at them, they'll look down and look at their book, so I do that a lot, too.

Mrs. Marsh also tried to monitor the comprehension of the students as they were reading by frequently interrupting the reading to ask questions related to the material just covered:

There are lots of times when we have just read a sentence or two or a paragraph, and I come in and I will ask--the word was defined within, the whole concept was right there in black and white--and I'll come back, and I'll say "What was so-and-so?" And I'll get this blank silence. And that tells me they're not listening. I say, "Look again, look again at the paragraph that was just read," and I'll repeat the question. . . . Unless I make that effort to go back and review what they just read . . . they're off daydreaming, thinking about other things, doodling on their paper.

Some of the flavor of the oral reading activity in Mrs. Marsh's classroom is illustrated in the following extract from field notes:

"Now," Mrs. Marsh says, "continuing where it says "Free Blacks" on page 252." Dorothy [a student] begins to read ... The girl who sits behind Dorothy begins to read after Dorothy finishes. This is what they read:

> There were about 250,000 free Blacks in the South. Various legal regulations placed them at the bottom of the social scale. Southern Whites regarded free Blacks with suspicion. Even if the Blacks kept to themselves they were a threat, for their very freedom made slaves envious and inspired uprisings.

As a result the position of free Blacks deteriorated rapidly as slavery fastened itself upon the South. Free Blacks were required to carry passes when traveling. They could not possess weapons or assemble in groups. They could not testify in court against Whites. And, although taxed, they could not vote. State laws made the freeing of slaves extremely difficult, and newly freed persons were usually required to leave the state.

Such regulations clearly made free Black people second-class citizens. Unwanted in the South, many might have moved to the North, except that conditions in the North were not much better. When one wealthy Virginian freed his 300 slaves and financed their way to Ohio, Ohio would not let them in.

When the students finish reading, Mrs. Marsh breaks in. "Okay," she says, "When we talked about slavery before, we talked about the rules and laws that regulated slaves. They could not have jobs, they could not have weapons, they couldn't leave the plantation without written permission from their owner. There were all these rules, what were these rules called?" At first there's no response and then someone timidly calls out "Regulations?" "That's what they were," Mrs. Marsh responds, "but what was the name for them?" She pauses again, then supplies the answer: "Remember slave codes? Now, after the Civil War we're going to see that there remained rules and regulations for free blacks and these were called Black Codes." Mrs. Marsh continues, "Now, who was the slave responsible to?--His owner, okay, now what were the reasons the Civil War was fought?" Several students call out the answer: "To free slaves." "Okay, okay," says Mrs. Marsh, "The Civil War was fought at least in part over slaves, and what happened to the slaves after the Civil War?" She pauses, and several students answer that "they were freed." "Alright," says Mrs. Marsh, "now hold your place in the book here and go to page 470 in the back of the book." She continues as the students turn the pages: "When we say 'free' we have certain thoughts about free, don't we? Okay, Now we're gonna look at Louisiana and see how Louisiana interpreted 'free' and we'll see if we agree with it. Now," she says, referring to the book, "In Louisiana they don't have cities or towns, etc., they have what are called parishes." Mrs. Marsh then begins reading some parish codes written on page 470. When she finishes she asks the class: "Is that freedom?" The students answer in chorus: "No." Mrs. Marsh asks: "Who was the free Black responsible to?" The students call out: "His employer." Mrs. Marsh reiterates this: "His employer. A slave was responsible to his owner, a free Black was responsible to his employer. Is there any difference?" The students call out that there isn't . . . "Now," Mrs. Marsh continues, "Black codes were what?" The students call out that these were regulations designed to control the Blacks. "And what were some of the Black Codes?" The students begin calling out what some of the codes were, and Mrs. Marsh herself begins providing some.

While the interaction was dependent on the text, Mrs. Marsh was manipulating the text to her own ends, attempting to link the content the students were engaged with both to content they had encountered in the past, and to content they would deal with in the future. In other instances, Mrs. Marsh would ask the students for the definitions of terms they had just

encountered in the text. Occasionally, she would foreshadow what would be read in the next paragraph by briefly summarizing the situation that would be described in the book. When she sensed that the students were not understanding the text (she would explain in stimulated recall interviews) she might use analogies to illustrate the situation, as in the following example, where the text had been concerned with the British blockade of American ports prior to the War of 1812:

> "I'll give you an example. Say Nancy [a student in the class] isn't supposed to come into the room. I won't let her. So what she does is she pays Sally [another student] to bring her things into the room. Is that fair?" Several of the students say "No," they don't think it's fair. "You don't think it's fair?" says Mrs. Marsh, "Well, that's your opinion. America is carrying goods for England and France. And England is searching the American ships and not letting them transport the goods to France. Now the English thought, I guess, that it wasn't fair for the Americans to take goods into France in the first place. You don't think it's fair for Sally to bring in things for Nancy, but Nancy thinks it's fair, and Sally's getting paid for it and she thinks it's fair. You don't think it's fair, but that's just your opinion. In the same way the French thought it was fair to get things. And the Americans who were getting paid to transport things for the French thought it was fair too. The Americans felt that it was very unfair for the English to stop their ships and search them. But you have to ask yourself was it fair, was it not fair? Was it fair for the Americans to be transporting the goods in the first place? It's your opinion. If you're getting paid to do it, it's fair. History is opinions. It's what do you think? And you've got to watch out.

In addition to having the students read aloud from the text, Mrs. Marsh occasionally led them through sets of written worksheet questions as they read. For example, immediately after the exchanges about "Black Codes" described above, Mrs. Marsh directed the students' attention to question 21 on the worksheet before them on their desks. This question read:

> Free Blacks were at the _____ of the social scale. Certain rules of behavior were attached to them called _____. These rules required Blacks to carry passes _____ not to assemble in groups. The could not testify in court or vote.

None of the text questions in this section of the book had dealt with the slave codes or Black Codes. The worksheets were to go into the students' notebooks (the students would get a grade for having them completed) and were to serve as aids in reviewing for tests (the tests would be constructed from items on such worksheets).

Mrs. Marsh also assigned text questions to the students, usually as homework. However, she usually led the students through some of the questions as they read the text so that there would be as little homework as possible:

> So they're walking out of here with that good feeling [that] even if it's homework, it isn't a drag. And even it it was classwork, well, she gave us half the answers in class--you know, it was easy. So it builds this idea that history is not a drag, homework is not a drag, even classwork is not so bad.

Homework questions were also checked orally in class. Mrs. Marsh would read the questions and tell the students what acceptable answers were. Many of the students (who did not grade their own papers) read the answers on the papers they checked and asked the teacher if these were acceptable. The purpose of these exercises, according to Mrs. Marsh, was to encourage the students to put things into their own words, rather than simply copy from the book:

> I'm trying to get them to put [the answers] in their own words, and they're more often correct than if they copy it out of the book. . . . They don't have confidence in themselves, they're afraid they're not gonna be right. If they copy it out of the book, they have a better chance of being right--so they think--which is not the case in my class . . . it doesn't work in here. Thinking, and then writing in their own thoughts is what I'm aiming at . . . That they begin to use their own words.

Mrs. Marsh's quizzes and tests generally included open-ended questions (e.g., "What is nationalism?" "What made the Americans so angry that they were willing to go to war against England in 1812?") as well as simple identification questions (e.g., "Who wrote the national anthem?").

Mrs. Marsh placed a great emphasis on the maintenance of certain standards of behavior. Students were expected to be in their seats when the bell rang, to have all of their materials, to keep quiet during class unless their participation was solicited, to stay in their seats unless given permission to move, and to keep the areas around their desk clean. She was very rarely called upon to enforce these rules. We saw no discipline problems (though she reported having problems with one particular student during a period which we didn't observe) and her classroom management system ran smoothly. In part, this may be a reflection of the fact that we observed her during the second half of the school year, after all of her students had apparently become socialized into her system of management. Even so, Mrs. Marsh had a reputation with the school administration, and among the other teachers, for running an extremely orderly classroom. Indeed, she boasted of the fact that individuals and groups of students who were still behavior problems in other classes were very well behaved in hers (and this in fact seemed to be the case).

Mrs. Marsh explained the practices described above largely in terms of her responses to the context in which she worked. But her definition of this context was very different from Mr. Webb's. First, she explained her practices as responses to the needs or characteristics of the community. This can be seen in her explanation of the oral reading as a response to the poor reading skills of the students, but it goes much further. It was a fundamental theme of Mrs. Marsh's conception of teaching that one should build character in the classroom, not simply transmit knowledge. In this regard, she distinguished herself from most of the other teachers:

> I don't think that we have enough . . . inspired teachers . . . to inspire the kids and to get them in the directions that are best suited for them. I think we're not teaching children, we're

teaching history. . . . That is the precept of many other people here. They don't feel that they are teaching children. I disagree. I'm not teaching history. I told one class at the beginning of the year: "If you don't learn any history, I won't be as upset if you learn not to be rude, and learn manners and learn behavior," I said, "I would be just as happy." . . . I was amazed when I got to school and teaching at how many kids didn't have manners. And it upset me. And I felt like "These parents say that it's your job and you've got them during the day, so you make the changes." So, I said, "I accept the responsibility."

I'm trained to build people. I'm trained to build these kids into something, and just teaching them history isn't the way to do it.

They are [my kids]. They are a part of me.

Interviewer: They have five other teachers during the day. What sort of impact or influence can you have on them, except for the 50 or 45 minutes they are in your classroom?

I feel like I have a greater impact on them . . .

Interviewer: Than all the other teachers put together?

Oh, I don't know about that, I'm not that good.

Interviewer: Than all the other teachers individually?

Yes. Yes, perhaps that. I think I'm saying that. I care about these kids, and they know that. I respect their ability to disagree with me, to argue with me . . . they can complain to me. And I don't lose track of them once they graduate from here. I watch them all the way through high school, and I watch what they have achieved, and I congratulate them. I send them notes and when they're hurt on the football field, I call the hospital. And that's because they're my kids, and they know they are. They know they are. You can ask anyone of those up there at the high school and they can tell you.

The crucial characteristics which allow us to understand something of this perspective--and many other aspects of Mrs. Marsh's teaching practice--are Mrs. Marsh's career pattern, and her place in the Dewey community.

Mrs. Marsh had settled in Dewey and had made a long-term commitment to living in the area. She and her husband (who also worked for the school district) owned land in the community and had no plans to move.

Mrs. Marsh was also content teaching junior high school history. History was her favorite subject area and she preferred working with junior high students as opposed to elementary students because the former were better able to carry on "mature" discussions. (Her husband, she explained, did not want her to teach in the high school.) Mrs. Marsh thus consciously set herself off from the transient teachers (who were "in it for the money" as she put it) who worked at Countryside for only a year or two before moving to better paying jobs. As Mrs. Marsh put it: "[Teaching] is my life and I love it. If it paid half as much, I would still be here, which frustrates my husband sometimes." This commitment expressed itself in her desire, not simply to teach, but to improve the community. She often spoke, for example, of her attempts to encourage the students to set their sights high:

> When I first came here, the kids who are seniors this year, when I would ask "What do you want to be?" One of the girls told me she wanted to be a checker at the Safeway. See that was her goal in life, that's as far as she expected to get. Well, the goals have been picking up every year.

Mrs. Marsh was also active in the community: She taught a Sunday school class at the seventh-grade level (where she became acquainted with many of the students who would be in her classes the following year) and claimed to see her students frequently outside the classroom context. She lived near the Superintendent of schools and was well enough acquainted with members of the School Board to have two of them speak to her classes about the student dress code at the school (an encounter which resulted in changes in the code).

For Mrs. Marsh, then, the context in which she saw herself operating was not simply the classroom or the administrative structure of the school, but the community of which she was a part and in whose betterment she saw herself as having a stake. She saw herself, moreover, as a stable

element in an organization dominated by transient teachers less committed than she to the general development of the students. As a result, she saw herself as having more influence over the students than other teachers, and she attempted to compensate for the other teachers--for example, trying to improve the students' reading skills in her history class.

Mrs. Marsh's commitment to the community also seemed to produce a reciprocal effect: The school was perhaps more committed to her than to other teachers. One important example of this commitment can be seen in the case of textbook selection.

As the descriptions of her classroom suggested, Mrs. Marsh was quite dependent on her textbook. However, her relationship to her text is different from that of any other teachers at the school because, unlike the other teachers, who were told that they would have to wait years to select new texts, she had been allowed to select and order her book. She could not explain why she had been given this right, but she did explain the selection criteria she used:

> I look for fair treatment of Indians, equal treatment of Blacks. Listing of women in history. I look for actual documents of [people's] opinions: the Constitution, speeches in particular: the Gettysburg address, Washington's farewell address when he left. Good review questions. When I first came here, the book I had, the kids could not understand the questions at all. So I look for good reviews, good summaries. I look for readability--I took a seminar on how to evaluate the readability of the text and I wanted to find it as close to the level as possible. And colorful--got to be bright and colorful.

Her adherence to the book, then, was at least in part a result of the fact that she had been allowed to choose it--and this in turn may have been linked to her status as a resident teacher of long standing. Another possible instance of favoritism is the fact that, while the other teachers stated that they were given only $40 a year for supplies, Mrs. Marsh simply said that when she needed something she requested it and

that she had never been turned down. Finally, Mrs. Marsh, a strong proponent of ability grouping, had not been able to introduce this practice in the school--but had been able to demand (as she put it) that she be allowed to "contract" with her "advanced" students and to give them special assignments which they worked at on their own.

It should not be assumed; however, that Mrs. Marsh was free from all administrative constraints. For example, in spite of such statements as those quoted above in which Mrs. Marsh suggested that her main goal was not to teach history, but to teach children (i.e., to build character), and other statements in which she said that she wanted the students to learn how to think critically (to know that "history is opinions" and that there were no simple right or wrong answers), Mrs. Marsh did give the students lengthy tests in which they had to identify or desribe details of events in American history. She explained:

> I have to do that. That is for paperwork. That is to satisfy parents as to why so-and-so failed. That's for records, record-keeping. You really can't tell if you have taught the child because kids who have not learned anything can pass the test. Kids that know things can't pass the test. So a test is not a good evaluation, but I have to give them. The only way you can tell if the kid has learned anything is to sit down and talk to them . . . I would much rather be in a non-grading situation. . . . I have been, and it's more satisfactory because you really know the kid knows something then.

The last comment in the quote above leads to one final important point about Mrs. Marsh's career: Her first teaching job had been in a Catholic private school in the city of Morton where she had been exposed to both ability grouping and to nongraded environments (both systems of teaching she strongly espoused). Her emphasis on character building may also be linked to this experience.

The foregoing discussion has described how teachers' practices may be influenced by their perceptions of the contexts in which they work. It may of course be argued that no causal relationship exists between context and beliefs, and beliefs and classroom practices. This is an issue I return to in the conclusion of the paper and deal with in more detail in other reports (Nespor, 1984a, 1984b).

It may also be argued that circumstances and characters such as those described above are peculiar to small rural schools. While this may be true to some extent (but see Nespor, 1983, for an ethnographic description of an urban school under great pressure for district and community interest groups), it should not be taken as a general criticism of the study. Over one-fourth of the K-12 and 1-12 school districts in the United States have enrollments of less than 900 (Smith, Muse, & Barker, 1983), and over one-third of all students in public schools in the country are in nonmetropolitan school districts (Sher, 1977). Insofar as research on teaching focuses only on schools in urban settings, a large sector of schooling is being neglected. Context, however, is not necessarily unimportant even in urban schools, as the following discussion of Cityside school and Mr. Franklin's teaching practice may suggest.

Cityside School

Cityside is 1 of 10 junior high schools (Grades 7 and 8) in the Morton school district. Morton is a city of approximately 350,000 inhabitants, with about 55,000 students enrolled in Grades K-12. Cityside is the smallest of the junior highs, with an enrollment of just over 500 students.

As a result of court-ordered busing to desegregate the Morton schools, Cityside serves three geographically and socially distinct areas of the city. Table 1 shows census tract data on the three districts. The overlap between

census tracts and catchment areas is not exact, but it is close enough to provide a realistic description of the students from the three areas. Two of the catchment areas are composed of three census tracts.

As Table 1 suggests, Area A is an affluent, predominantly Anglo neighborhood; Area B is a poor, predominantly Black neighborhood; and Area C is a middle-class Mexican-American neighborhood. According to Census data, most residents in Area A are in managerial or professional occupations, while service and blue-collar craft occupations predominate in Area B. Sales, craft, and "machine operation, transportation and general laboring" are the main areas of employment in Area C. Cityside school is located in the heart of Area A and before desegregation served only that area of the city. Area B is about 10 miles away from the school and Area C is about 20 miles distant.

The student body of Cityside is around 45% Anglo (most from Area A), 25% Black (most from Area B), and 28% Mexican-American (most from Area C). The students from these three areas were recognized as distinct populations by teachers at Cityside school:

> Some of the people come from [Area C] which is a kind of indigenous community made up mostly of Mexican-American and Black people . . . It [Area C] was there before Morton, the people who came and surveyed for this town camped there . . . the feeling of community is real [there]. . . . [Area C] is like a small town, and [Area B] is like the ghetto in a big city. . . . The [Area B] people are all Black, or almost all Black. And then we have the community that lives around the school [Area A]. The community that lives around the school is by definition educated, relatively affluent--the real estate is very high, it's traditionally been high . . . and almost all professional people . . . almost everybody's father works for IBM or is a doctor, or a lawyer, or business executive, or some such stuff.

Some of the teachers also believed that parents and students from the various groups possessed different educational aspirations and expectations. Mr. Franklin, for example, whose class is examined later in this paper, had once taught in a high school serving Area B:

> I was always teaching kids who were the first kids in their family ever to graduate from high school. . . . I would love to go to graduation because there was no pomp and circumstance, and all this kind of stuff. There was applause: "Yea!, we did it." . . . These people [from Area A] . . . it's all real predictable, I mean, the guarantee is there. It isn't a question of if you're gonna go to college, it's where--which college is gonna be good enough, or are you gonna be good enough for.

The social differences between the groups from the different areas (and the geographical separation of Areas B and C from the school site) were reflected in differing levels of parental interaction with the school. Most parent contacts with the school took place through the PTA. The PTA itself was dominated by parents from Area A, even though attempts had been made to diversify membership: Buses were provided to shuttle parents from Areas B and C to meetings (all of which were held at the school), and attempts were made (without success) to recruit parents from Areas B and C to the PTA governing board. The teachers we interviewed suggested that the lack of participation from these areas was a result of there being more single-parent households in Areas B and C, with more parents working night jobs. It was also thought by one of the teachers that the poorer, less educated Blacks and Mexican-Americans from Areas B and C might be intimidated by the affluent Anglo PTA members. In fact, the activities carried out by the PTA did reflect reflect the affluence of its membership. As one teacher put it, the PTA

> does nice things for the teachers [i.e., gives them meals on holidays, buys them exercise machines] and they provide volunteer support. They have a coordinated volunteer thing, so if you need somebody to help you, they provide tutors, they provide materials, they provide speakers . . . they'll be the contact point between the community and the school. And if you want somebody to come in and talk about this or that, they'll help you find somebody.

There was, however, another side to this matter: It was the affluent parents from Area A who were said to be most involved, sometimes intrusively, with the school:

> The parents up in [Area A] are supportive, but they--I hate to generalize and yet I'm doing it--If there'd be a problem where the parent would stick up for the kid and get after the teacher, or really criticize the teacher, it would be more [likely to be] someone from this area [Area A] than from [Area B or Area C]. There [i.e., in Areas B and C] it's more like, well, the teacher knows best, or the teacher is right.
>
> Interviewer: What do you think the difference could be?
>
> Part of it . . . might be . . . well, if they didn't have as much education I think they'd feel like the teacher, who has more education, would know better, and so what the teacher says is right. And here too, when someone is earning probably two, three times as much as I am [as the people in Area A do], they probably feel they have a right to jump all over me . . . they're more used to maybe being in positions of authority where they give orders.

As the same teacher remarked, in another interview:

> [The Area A parents] are used to having things done a certain way . . . one of the big things, I think, when the busing started [was] the other schools where these [the Area A] students went [had] certain programs added--or they made sure that they were where those programs were so their kids would have them. They're not going to take second fiddle to anybody, you know. . . . They make their needs heard, they definitely can be vocal.

Cityside did in fact have some special program offerings. It was, for example, a "foreign language magnet school" offering instruction in such languages as Spanish, German and French (Countryside, by contrast, had no foreign language instruction). Whether this was coincidence or the result of parental pressure, however, is not clear.

The Morton school district is relatively affluent. The average teacher salary in the district is just under $20,000 (compared to less than $12,000 in Countryside, and beginning pay in Morton is higher than the maximum salary at Countryside). Salaries vary on the basis of years of service and educational credentials (i.e., the longer one works the higher the salary--although this reaches a maximum after about 12 years. Also, teachers with Master's degrees are paid more than teachers with bachelors, and in some cases, according to the teachers, the district may offer stipends for people pursuing advanced degrees). Neither of the teachers

interviewed at the school felt the rate of pay was a major consideration in their decisions to remain in the teaching profession (although both suggested that this was due in part to the fact that they had built up seniority, and that salary might be a more important factor if they were just entering the system).

The Morton district is resource-rich relative to the Countryside district. Numerous resource personnel are available: Cityside has both general counselors and vocational counselors. There are district curriculum coordinators for different subject matter areas, and curriculum guides are issued to the teachers. Teachers are also able to participate in "team teaching" activities and to have student teachers in their classrooms (neither of which take place in the Countryside district). Both teachers reported that these were important sources of information. For example, Mr. Franklin, the teacher examined later in the paper, recounted that when he had taught at the high school level:

> We had a large open area, half was English and half was social studies . . . that was a very positive experience . . . you really had to keep your stuff together because you were working constantly with four teachers [The other social studies teacher in this arrangement] had been teaching social history for 14 years, and so she had file cabinets full of stuff . . . and of course, I stole whatever I thought was good and adapted [it] to my teacher personality. A lot of the stuff I'm using here I got from her. It's nice to have the isolation and the ability to do what you want with your own content, but when you're isolated you don't tend to get very stimulated from the other people.

Teachers are apparently required to attend more inservice meetings than the minimum required by the state, and in some circumstances teachers are given paid leave to attend such seminars. The district itself organizes and offers a wide range of inservice meetings, many geared to the demands of particular content areas. Both of the teachers interviewed reported that such seminars had been important influences on their

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teaching. Finally, the regional service center is located in the town of Morton and is readily accessible to the teachers there.

According to the teachers, materials are in sufficient supply, and $400 in supplemental money is given to each "department" to be used at the discretion of its members. A department consists of all the teachers in a subject matter area. The social studies department at Cityside, for example, would be the two seventh grade history teachers and the two eighth grade history teachers. The existence of content area "departments" suggests another feature of teaching at Cityside that distinguishes it from Countryside: the possibility of collegial discourse with other teachers. In addition to working together in departments, teachers at Cityside work together on various committees and have fairly active unions. The teachers' lounge at the school is large and teachers can comfortably carry on conversations there. These could sometimes result in changes in teacher practice:

> The warm-ups are something I added last year . . . the math teachers were always talking about their warm-ups in the lunch room . . . this one math teacher and I were pretty good friends and we'd sit together and visit and she told me that it was something they did when they [the students] came in and that way they settled down, and that was something that was bugging me. So I tried to think of what I had that I could use as warm-ups, and I did use spelling right away, but I also used some little worksheets . . .

The hiring of teachers in Morton differs greatly from the practice in Countryside. In Morton, prospective teachers apply to the district personnel office and are referred to schools with openings. There is no shortage of applicants. According to one administrator at Cityside, "We interview five or six people for one position." Another explained: "Morton's in a somewhat unique position, being a university town. You don't have to look too far [to find a teacher]." Teacher turnover is not a significant problem.

Prospective teachers are interviewed by the principal and/or vice-principal, or in some cases by the department chairperson in their subject matter area. Interviewing practices seem to vary from school to school. The ultimate decision for hiring, however, is the principal's.

A beginning teacher in the district is put on probation for 3 years. This means that at the end of a school year a teacher can be dismissed without appeal; the district can simply decline to rehire the teacher. After the 3 years of probation, the teacher is offered a 3-year contract:

> And if you're on a 3 year contract, then they can't terminate that contract, without telling you that you're back on probationary status. It gives you some security . . . if you're on a 3 year contract, they have a longer, more involved evaluative process [than if you're on probation].

The existence of the 3-year contract is credited to the efforts of the teachers' unions in the district (there were union members at Countryside, but they had no apparent influence on school policy).

Evaluation in the Morton school district is much more routinized and systematic than it is in Countryside:

> Each year . . . the school board requires the administration to come in . . . there's a long form on teacher compentencies . . . it's like 73 competencies that we're supposed to have and they're supposed to be observable things . . . It's a Likert scale kind of thing, where it's "outstanding", five, four, three, two, one. "One" being some sort of potted plant . . . what usually happens is that they give you one and you do it. And then they do it--they've done observations over the year . . . when you have your evaluative conference, then you go in to the principal and he gives you this thing, and then he marks his, and then you reconcile the two . . . And then that goes in your file. But to me, the important thing is the observations, most of them do a kind of episodic observation.
>
> Interviewer: It's the principal or . . . ?
>
> There are usually two people who come in: the assistant principal, the principal or the subject area coordinator for the school district.

Although it is more thorough than at Countryside, the teachers we interviewed felt that the evaluation process at Cityside was geared primarily towards satisfying administrative needs (e.g., providing rationales for rehiring or dismissing teachers) rather than towards improving teacher practice.

Within the school, matters such as discipline are highly routinized. Corporal punishment is not allowed (although it is at other schools at the district). The referral process is well established, and the vice-principal of the school is in charge of disciplinary decision making.

During the year in which this research was undertaken, the only ability grouping at Cityside was in the form of "honors" classes. In previous years, however, there had also been "remedial" classes. Placement in the honors classes was done primarily on the basis of standardized tests scores, although one teacher reported that parents could influence placement by complaining to the school principal. The students in the honors classes were mainly Anglo, while the students in the remedial classes had been composed primarily of ethnic minority students.

At Cityside, there were two teachers for each subject matter area at each grade level. There were 8 to 10 sections for each course, with 2 or 3 of the sections being "honors" classes. One of the two teachers would teach all of the honors classes, the assignment of these classes apparently being at the discretion of the principal.

Unlike the situation at Countryside, there were no close ties between school personnel and the neighborhoods served by the school. Many of the teachers, including those interviewed in this study, did not live in any of the three communities served by Cityside, nor did the teachers speak of running into parents in nonschool settings. There was no sense, as there had

been at Countryside, of "the community" having certain values and expectations that the school had to abide by. There was, however, a perception among at least some teachers that schools (not just Cityside) were better geared to the needs of a middle-class, relatively affluent clientele than to an ethnic minority, working-class clientele:

> If you have someone who comes from a working-class family . . . very often they have a job--I mean, they go and work with their parents on weekends . . . laying bricks, janitorial services and stuff with their parents. . . . I think that they [the parents] have a real hard time . . . modeling the things, I mean . . . we're gonna give [the kids] the universal college prep, academic thing to a certain point, whether they need it or not. I mean, that's what we're structured to do . . . There's very little provision for individual differences . . . we're teaching the middle, and assuming that everybody would do better if they went to college. . . . If the parents have never been to college, what are they supposed to do to help their kid get ready for college: make money and pray a lot.

The Morton school district also had a much more hierarchical structure than Countryside's district. The highest district offical with whom a teacher might expect to have face-to-face contact would be the curriculum coordinator for their subject matter area. The Superintendent would rarely be seen at the school, School Board members probably not at all.

As the brief summary above should suggest, Cityside and Countryside were very different contexts for teaching. As might be expected, they had different influences on teachers, and this influence was exerted in different ways. I shall try to illustrate this by discussing the classroom of one Cityside teacher, Mr. Franklin, the eighth grade history teacher.

Mr. Franklin's Repertoire

Mr. Franklin had taught in the Morton district for about 10 years: first at the high school level, and for the last 3 years at Cityside. His teaching repertoire contained the following elements:

1. Mr. Franklin used the chalkboard to cue his students to the days activities and to their place in the unit they were presently studying. On the front board was written each day a set of activities that the students were to perform while Mr. Franklin took roll (these could be such things as defining terms, preparing headings for papers, etc.). The materials (e.g., textbooks, notebooks) that the students needed for class that day were also listed. The students were supposed to attend to this list and carry out any activities listed without being specifically told. On the side board of the classroom the unit objectives were listed, along with a list of all of the products that the students were supposed to produce for that unit (these were to be kept in the students' notebooks).

2. Probably a plurality of class sessions were taken up with Mr. Franklin lecturing the students. These lectures frequently included the use of audio-visual equipment--especially slides--which Mr. Franklin would use as props. The students could ask questions and initiate discussions, but discussions were not built into the structure of the activity by Mr. Franklin.

3. The students were occasionally asked to read aloud from the textbook. This is done on a volunteer basis.

4. Students were frequently given seatwork assignments to do in class. These consisted of a variety of activities: doing worksheets, answering text questions, outlining sections of the book, and so on. The students were occasionally allowed to work in pairs or groups while performing these activities.

5. The students were tested over the material covered in class. The teacher also occasionally gave "notebook" quizzes in which he checked to see that the students were keeping their notebooks up to date.

6. Special activities were irregularly introduced into the class. For example, the students put on a play about an historical incident; the teacher

introduced a lesson on national symbolism so that the students could act as judges for flags of countries made by a Transitional Bilingual Education class at the school, and so on.

Mr. Franklin's classroom. Mr. Franklin feels that he has complete autonomy in determining what he teaches in his classroom:

> Speaking as a general rule, in the schools where I've taught, provided that my kids don't cause trouble and aren't noisy and disturb their neighbors, and I don't cause a scandal, the principal, the administration, has no knowledge whatsoever, they have no way of knowing at all, what I'm teaching. So I have absolute control of what goes on in my room. Now, if I'm doing things that are outside my curriculum area I'm at risk . . . but ultimately I have total control.

This may seem surprising, given that the district has a well established set of curricular guidelines specifying the content objectives that are to be met. As Mr. Franklin, who has had experience writing district curricular guidelines, explains:

> When I came in the building they said, okay, here's your Spring semester and Fall semester outline. And, a lot of people just put 'em in their book and forget them. I mean, you don't necessarily have to look at it--nobody's gonna come along and check, as far as I know . . . I always figure that people give me these things to help me. So I use them when I think they're appropriate, and I don't use them when I don't [think they are appropriate]. And I imagine most people do that.

Because Mr. Franklin organized his course around "units" consisting of linked objectives and activities, it is difficult to provide a brief description that realistically captures the flavor of the course. Indeed, the weekly nature of our observations made it difficult to see how the various activities fit together. However, the following descriptions and extracts from fieldnotes should at least suggest some of the basic feature of instruction in Mr. Franklin's class.

The classes described below were part of a unit on "North American Indian Cultures." The objectives for this unit, written on the board, were as folows:

> 1. To locate and identify major land forms and climactic factors affecting North America.
>
> 2. To identify the major North American Indian Nations. Locate the areas in which each tribe lived and discuss how their cultures, especially their shelter and food sources, were related to their environments.
>
> 3. To describe aspects of the various cultures, compare and contrast them with our own modern culture, and predict how they will interact with later Europeans.

These objectives were not specified in any curricular guidelines. As Mr. Franklin explained:

> I make them up. . . . They [the district] give me my general objectives with an outline, and they tell me what I'm supposed to cover. But then it's up to me to take a look at what's there and what I think that they should know. That's teacher prerogative. And so I write them, I like to keep them few enough in number that they aren't overwhelming, but you probably noticed from looking at them that they're very broad. . . . They're the things that I think are important from that unit. I know a lot of other people don't cover the same things that I do.
>
> I want them to be able to see how they [the Indians] interact with their environment, and to be able to look at their culture and to be able to predict some of the conflicts that are going to arise when Europeans come in.

The students spend the first 3 days on this unit outlining a chapter in the textbook. The first day Mr. Franklin briefly explained students what outlining was, then had students read paragraphs aloud from the book as he showed on an overhead projector what the outline for that passage would look like. The following extract is taken from field notes:

> [After a student has read a passage from the book]. Mr. Franklin then explains that in the part the student had just read, the author was beginning to talk about the dry lands of the southwestern United States, and that the author of the text had divided different cultures up in terms of their food sources. Mr. Franklin then moves to the topic of farming, which is one of the food sources mentioned in the book, and asks the students where farming came from: "Who were the first farmers?" Someone answers: "The Indians were the first farmers." Mr. Franklin responds by

asking, "Indians from where?" And some students answer "Mexico." This is apparently something they've covered in earlier lessons.

"Okay," says Mr. Franklin, "the author has divided up his discussion of the Indians in terms of their food sources, and the first food source he's going to consider is farming. So roman numeral I is "Farmers." Mr. Franklin goes to the overhead projector where he has a transparency with his outline on it. He has a sheet of paper covering it, and he gradually moves the sheet of paper down over the course of the class, allowing the students to see more and more of his outline as he goes along. At this point he pulls the paper down so that the students can see that under roman numeral I he has written "Farmers - Ideas spread from the South (Mexico)." "Now," he continues, turning back to the class, "you don't have to copy my exact words, but you should have essentially the same ideas that I have up here."

Mr. Franklin then begins quizzing the kids a little about farming. For example, he asks Ted: "Ted, we talked about four things that you needed for farming. The first thing was water. Now, if it's dry land where these Indians are, where does the water come from?" Ted, after a moment's thought, answers that it must come from rivers. So Mr. Franklin moves the sheet of paper to show that "A" under roman numeral I says "Dry lands of the Southwest--river irrigation." After making this point, Mr. Franklin tells the students that there are basically no tricks in the book, that things are going to be very straightforward, and that they can expect the same patterns to hold over and over again as the author of the book discusses different topics . . .

[Another student reads from the book. When the student finishes] Mr. Franklin says to the class, "Okay, now where he stopped reading is where the book finishes talking about the Mogollon tribe. Now, when I'm reading through the book and doing an outline, I'll read a whole section about one topic and then I'll stop and fill in my outline, because I don't want to go on reading, and that way miss something. Okay, now what did the book say about the Mogollon tribe?" There is no immediate response and Mr. Franklin refers to the unit objectives on the board and says that one of the things they're to do is to locate these Indian tribes. "Okay," he asks, "where did they live?"

This sort of activity continued to the end of the class: Mr. Franklin had the students read, asked them questions (some of which required to the students to recall information covered in previous units, and some of which required general reasoning skills: e.g., why would the Indians in the Southwest have built their houses in pits), and lead them through an outline of the first part of the chapter.

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The next week, after having had the students produce an outline on their own, Mr. Franklin gave them a "skeleton" outline. This is part of the skeleton outline:

I. Economic Aspects
   A.
      1.
         a.
         b.
      2.
   B.
   C.

And so on.

The skeleton outline was to be used, not with a portion of the text, but as an aid in taking notes while Mr. Franklin lectured. The skeleton outline would not be graded, but Mr. Franklin told the students that it should help them a lot when they studied for the test. As Mr. Franklin lectured, he would occasionally point out to the students how something he had just said fit into the outline. However, the students were not allowed to ask questions directly related to the outline.

During the lecture, Mr. Franklin made extensive use of slides, showing students pictures and illustrations of, for example, the types of structures the Indians lived in. These slides had been collected by Mr. Franklin himself and were well integrated into the structure of the lecture. That is, the slides were used only as props to make particular points (or as a basis for quizzing students about aspects of the scene depicted in the slide).

Mr. Franklin's unit tests were long and composed of a number of sections. For example, the test on the North American Indian unit referred to above was six pages long. One section was composed of multiple choice completion items; a second required the students to pick the "least similar items" from lists of items that had been discussed with

the unit. A third section showed a blank map of the United States and asked the students to identify 10 major geographical featues (e.g., the Great Lakes). A fourth section of the test consisted of analogies (e.g., "The _____ were to the 'pueblos' as the _____ were to the 'Long Houses'"). A fifth section required to fill in blanks in a paragraph with the appropriate vocabulary items, while a sixth part consisted of true/false items. For some tests, Mr. Franklin would allow the students to prepare "cheat sheets"--on the assumption that the reviewing the students would have to do to produce the sheets would be beneficial to them. Mr. Franklin also offered to read sections of the test verbally to students if they felt they were having trouble understanding his instructions or the test items themselves.

Mr. Franklin had an elaborate system of classroom management. Each student had a card filed in a box on a table near the door to the room. If a student entered the room after the bell, or had to leave the room during class (to retrieve a book from a locker, or to go to the bathroom) the student took the card from the box and punched a hole in the appropriate place to indicate the infraction. The students were to do this without being told (and did so). Mr. Franklin's rules of classroom behavior were written on the board at the front of the room. Students who broke these rules had their names written on the board along with the number of the rule they had broken (generally, Mr. Franklin would not verbally note or refer to the infraction). However, such infractions very rarely took place. The students were quiet when they were supposed to be (e.g., during lectures). When, in the midst of some class activity that allowed students to talk among themselves, Mr. Franklin wanted the class's attention, he would simply stand at the front of the room holding his hand in the air. The class would usually become quiet in a matter of seconds.

As we have seen, Mr. Franklin felt that he had complete autonomy over decisions about content and methods of instruction. This is not to say that contextual features had no effect on his practice. Rather, it means that his autonomy within the classroom allowed him to compensate for contextual constraints. He felt, for example, somewhat dissatisfied with the textbook he was given to use (or rather, the fact that he had only one book to use, which he felt was not suitable for all of his students). He dealt with this problem by de-emphasizing textbook use and supplementing the book with lectures (often based on his own knowledge and reading) and audiovisual materials (such as the slides). The following anecdote, though admittedly describing a unique incident, does illustrate the extent to which Mr. Franklin felt that his within-class autonomy allowed him to deal with constraints or needs at a wider level of context:

> The first year I taught [at a high school in Areas B and C], I lost 13 kids to pregnancy--in the ninth grade. And the idea to me that they weren't being told anything about birth control until they got to be juniors in high school was insane--it wasn't being mentioned anywhere in the curriculum. So I was teaching a unit on it in my geography--you know, it was "population control." I had it all figured out: if somebody called up and they said "why are you doing this?" I was gonna be able to say, "Well, we were learning about population control and scarcity of resources, and all this kind of stuff."

Thus Mr. Franklin's autonomy at the classroom level allowed him to be responsive to what he preceived to be the needs of the community. The incident described in the anecdote is also revealing in another way. As Mr. Franklin recalled the incident, he went on to suggest:

> I think that because I was doing that on the [Area B and Area C] side of town, where the level of parent involvement is a whole lot less, that the chances of me getting caught were a lot less. I mean, I wouldn't do it here [at Cityside] because the parents [from Area A] are a lot more actively involved in what goes on in the schools.

In short, Mr. Franklin's autonomy with regard to content is not a given, but a product of his own autonomy-seeking activities and the particular school context in which he teaches. To understand this, we must examine some particulars of Mr. Franklin's teaching career.

Mr. Franklin had not originally trained to be a teacher. He took his undergraduate degree in a liberal arts field and after a stint in the armed forces entered business school. There, taking management courses, he became convinced that he most enjoyed "structured interaction" and "talking about thinking," and with the encouragement of one of his business professors switched majors to education. Mr. Franklin thus entered teaching in his late 20s--a factor which he felt contributed significantly to his smooth entry into the field. He said that he had not experienced any difficulty in managing his classrooms or maintaining order (something he said seemed to bother the young teachers just out of college that he had seen or worked with as a cooperating teacher).

As already mentioned, Mr. Franklin began teaching social studies at the high school level. The school served the poor, minority areas of the city, and Mr. Franklin had problems adjusting to the setting. He felt the many of the students lacked respect for themselves and their social groups, and had very limited educational goals. He quickly became disenchanted with teaching. Another factor contributing to this dissatisfaction was the administrative climate at the school he worked in: He had conflicts with the administration and felt the principal in particular was hostile. As a result, Mr. Franklin soon left teaching. He worked in a self-employed, noneducation occupation for a 2 years, then decided to try education once again, this time as an administrator. He returned to college and obtained an administrative certificate.

Returning to Morton, Mr. Franklin found that no administrative jobs were available, so he went back to the classroom, hoping to enter an administrative position at a later date. The school he began teaching in when he returned to Morton served a different student clientele and had a very different administrative climate--one much more suited to Mr. Franklin's tastes (he has turned down offers to move to other schools). While he still hopes to move into administration, he is reasonably content at present.

Mr. Franklin's career suggests that autonomy and relative freedom from administrative constraints were important career goals that he actively sought--and that such autonomy had not been a constant, but something really attained only at his present position (on the importance of autonomy, see Jackson, 1968, pp. 129-133).

Mr. Franklin's career path has also had an important influence on his classroom practice. This influence takes the form of Mr. Franklin making sense of the demands and problems he faces at the junior school level by constrasting that setting to high school. In part, differences in Mr. Franklin's practice in junior high compared to high school derive from objective differences between the two settings. For example, the fact that grades are recorded differently in the two settings allowed him to manipulate grades as a means of motivating students:

> Here in junior high the grades don't count, they're not recorded anywhere. I mean, I didn't find that out for almost a year.
>
> Interviewer: Explain that to me.
>
> What I'm saying is that they don't go into anybody's permanent file. They're not in the computer, they're not anywhere. I mean I worked hard recording them and the kids live and die for them . . . and none of that matters. The only grade that's carried forward is the average for the year . . . So I have a little more flexibility . . . I'm not going to get hung up with grades as much as I was at

the high school level, where they're part of the permanent record. So, I feel as if I can use them as a carrot or a stick.

Mr. Franklin could thus get extra performance from his good students by grading them "harder," since they had a strong desire to make good grades. At the same time he could try to motivate his poorly performing students by holding out to them the chance of making a passing final grade even though they might be at a point where a strict averaging of grades would prevent them from passing.

Even more important than the objective differences between the two levels may be the fact that Mr. Franklin's conceptualizations of his students and the proper ways to teach them were products of a comparison of junior high students to high school students. Consider, for example, the unit on North American Indians and Mr. Franklin's use of unit objectives written on the board:

> Interviewer: Have you ever tried teaching about Indians to eighth graders in a different way? Did you have the system worked out when you first came here?
>
> No, I had never taught about Indians to eighth graders--I had taught about Indians to 11th graders. . . . Most of them [the 11th graders] were able to handle abstractions ... and the first year I taught down here [at Cityside] I got a lot of blank stares and people who didn't turn in work and I would see that what was wrong was that they weren't understanding what I wanted them to. And I have to try to make it more concrete for them. . . . The first year I was here I didn't teach it this way and I wasn't very successful. I found that they did very poorly on this unit. So the next year I looked at what I was doing and said, "Well, how come people who're intelligent and seem to do well on the other units bombed on this one? And part of the reason was because of the way it was presented to them.
>
> Interviewer: So, when you make it "more concrete," that's breakng it down into small parts . . .
>
> That's correct, and asking them specific questions and showing them the patterns that I want. . . . The first year I just handed the unit objectives out and assumed that they looked at them and knew them. And obviously they didn't, they didn't have any clue what they were there for, they were just a piece of paper. So last year and this year I've been spending a lot of time stressing them and doing it

in my review work, saying "okay, look at your unit objective" and trying to let them make the connection.

The emphasis on making aspects of his teaching practice "concrete" pervaded Mr. Franklin's classroom. Consider, for example, his classroom management system. Periodically throughout the school year Mr. Franklin would give the students little paper tokens ("Behavior bucks") if they had not broken any rules. These "bucks" could be used to "buy" some special privilege (e.g., the right to go down the street and eat pizza at a restaurant for lunch).

> Interviewer: Would you try the same sorts of techniques [with high school students]?
>
> Oh, with high school students, well, I could pretty much verbalize the way I'm doing with you. . . . I never did that [used the written rules and paper tokens] in high school--the little tokens with my picture on them and stuff like that, I mean, that's pretty hokey . . . [but] if I give it to them in some sort of concrete terms they [the eighth graders] can manage it.

As he explained:

> I looked at what had functioned for me in the past, and when I first came down here [to the junior high level] it wasn't functioning--when I just verbalized these things the way I did when I taught juniors and seniors in high school . . . And when I came down here, a minority of my students were able to deal with abstract concepts. So, I was faced with, after 2 weeks, having to decide, "Hey, I'm gonna have to do some structuring of the environment here or this is gonna be nuts." . . . And my wife dealt a lot with behavior management systems when she taught emotionally disturbed kids. And so we sat and talked a lot about, you know, who needs concrete kinds of things, and who doesn't. And I found that the more sophisticated kids get past the little token real quickly. . . . The less sophisticated kids, I think, need that concrete thing. They keep them in their wallet, just as if it were money.

High school students, in Mr. Franklin's experience, were not only able to understand abstract concepts better, but were also more certain of what school meant to them:

> I didn't make my 12th graders keep notebooks and stuff like that because the majority of those kids . . . were either not gonna go to college, or the ones who were going to college were already keeping the notebooks and stuff.

Most importantly, high school students had a better understanding of the school as a formal setting with a rule system deriving not from the personal relationship of teacher and student, but from their organizational relationship. Mr. Franklin's conception of teaching as a formal, contractual realtionship between teacher and student was reiterated many times:

> I make it plain to them from the very beginning that there are school rules that have to be followed because I am a contractual employee of the school district.
>
> [Referring to the curriculum guidelines] I just tell the students "This is what they told me to do." And I'm going to do that because I told them I would when I signed my contract.
>
> I try to establish as businesslike a relation as I can with them. I want them to know that I care about them, but I don't want to be their fathers and I don't want to be the symbol of authority for them.

This conception of teaching as a contractually-defined, businesslike relationship would have been difficult or impossible to maintain in a school such as Countryside, where personal and formal roles were difficult or impossible for the teachers to separate. For Mr. Franklin, by contrast, it was a feature of the workplace necessary to insure autonomy. At the same time, the objective circumstances of Mr Franklin's work situation--the lack of a unitary community base served by the school, the fact that he lived far from the neighborhoods served by the school--made autonomy more easily attainable. Mr. Franklin did not teach without regard for the community contexts of the schools in which he worked, but it was he, rather than the community, who determined when and in what way his teaching should be made relevant to community needs (as he defined them). Finally, the one group served by the school that could have potentially exerted pressure on Mr. Franklin--the affluent professional parents of Area A--very likely shared his business-like definition of teacher-student relationships.

The interactions between school environments and teacher beliefs that have been described in this report are clearly very complex. To this point, I have attempted to explain or clarify them in terms of the unique characteristics of the schools and the teachers. In the next section I try to devleop a more general framework for conceptualizing these issues.

Discussion

The preceding portions of this report have been primarily descriptive. In part this has been a result of the complex and multifaceted nature of the issues being examined. To have compressed the patterns of resource distribution at Countryside into indices of "school climate," or the beliefs of the teachers into categories derived from answers to surveys or structured interviews, would have been to seriously distort the issues. The emphasis on description also reflects an assumption that research, if it is to be comprehensible and persuasive not only to those who share the researcher's assumptions and universe of discourse, but to nonresearchers, practitioners, and interested laymen, must be presented in a form commensurable with people's commonsense, everyday perceptions of reality: hence the narrative style of the descriptions.

However, case study research and narrative styles of description have certain inherent drawbacks: Most importantly, they tend to focus attention on the special or unique aspects of events, situations or personalities, and to neglect the more general or global issues implicated in the particular cases. What is at work here has been called the "postulate of commensurate complexity" (Thorngate, 1976), which states that it is impossible for a description or theory of social behavior to be simultaneously "general," "accurate," and "simple." Any two of the qualities can be combined, but only at the expense of the third. Case studies, such as this one, combine simplicity and accuracy, but lack generality. To gain generality, it is

necessary to trade off simplicity. This is done in two ways here. First, the ways in which "objective" constraints are distributed in the schools are summarized. Second, some general concepts for understanding how constraints interact with teachers' beliefs to influence classroom teaching are introduced.

The Social Distribution of Environmental Constraints.

Resource allocation patterns have attracted much attention from researchers interested in topics such as the role of schools in status attainment, or the educational effects of such factors as "school climate" (see e.g., Bidwell & Kasarda, 1975; Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, & York, 1966). These studies typically proceed by aggregating statistically manipulable proxies of such factors as district resources; parental, student and teacher characteristics for the schools in question; structural characteristics of the school (e.g., homogeneous ability tracking); and the like. These aggregate indices are then linked to outcomes at various levels of school organizations (for example, individual student achievement, or outcomes framed at the school or district level).

This line of research encounters two basic problems. First, it is often impossible to specify the interactions of the numerous variables that are aggregated--the mechanisms and processes through which the discovered effects occur remain unclear. Secondly, as Barr and Dreeben (1983) argue, processes at different levels of the educational system (e.g., district, school, classroom) are conflated. Processes at one level of organization may be mediated through other levels of organization:

> Understanding educational production depends upon the proper identification of organizational levels . . . Once the levels have been correctly specified, it is still necessary to characterize the nature of the resources that come into play at each of them, to

> describe how they are related to each other to form coherent productive activities, and to establish how these activities yield their respective outcomes. There is no reason to assume that simply adding individual characteristics and experiences through statistical procedures to create class, school, and district aggregations will provide conceptually adequate representations of how school production works. (p. 26)

Here, attention is focused primarily on the ways the availability of resources acts as a constraint on instruction. The argument is that such constraints are not objectively given, nor do they affect all actors or agencies in the same fashion. Instead, constraints should be seen as socially distributed--as influencing different actors or agencies in different ways according to the individual characteristics of the actors or agencies and their relational positions. Such constraints may operate on an interdistrict level, on a district level, on a school level, or on a classroom level.

Interdistrict constraints. In their analysis of the levels of school organization, Barr and Dreeben (1983) identify the school district as the broadest level of organization. However, it seems plausible to assume that in some cases school districts compete with each other for resources (e.g., qualified or experienced teachers) or are compared by prospective workers or clients. Hiring practices are examples of constraints that, at least in this study, were manifested on this interdistrict level. The two school districts described in this report were not equally able to attract the same types of teachers (nor were the same sorts of teachers attracted to the two districts). Factors such as salary levels, levels of bureaucratization (e.g., the amount of "red tape" required in disciplining students); district reputation (e.g., poor race relations or "discipline" problems); and community resources (e.g., the amenities of city life and their absence in the country) influenced the types of teachers who applied for employment and who remained in the districts for relatively long periods of time.

Note that these were not simply district effects, but effects produced by the characteristics of districts relative to one another. When districts differing sharply in their characteristics are in close geographical proximity, as in the present study, a cycling effect may come into being, with teachers trying to move from the less to the more favored districts. At the same time, the differential abilities of districts to attract teachers may produce different hiring requirements. The more desirable districts can be more selective--limiting their hiring to, say, experienced teachers.

Interdistrict or interschool flows of teachers are poorly studied, and in some regions of the country such mobility may be less common than in the case studied here, or the mobility may occur on an interschool basis within districts (see Becker, 1952; Nespor, 1983). But such mobility would seem potentially important to understanding how teachers learn to teach: If teachers are more likely to begin their careers at impoverished schools such as Countryside (the very types of schools in which they are unlikely to have had student teaching experience), how does this influence their classroom practice in other schools?

District-level and School-level constraints. In many cases district and school level influences are not easily distinguished, especially when, as in the case of Countryside, there is only one school at a given level in the district. Constraints on instruction may emerge from decisions made at the district or school level (either as constraints directly imposed, or as unintended by-products of such decisions) or as products of school or district characteristics.

Community constraints on instruction are clearly distributed by district level policies. In neither district were direct parental pressures observed, though teachers in both schools saw the potential for such pressures. However, the responses of the three teachers differed. The two teachers at

Countryside faced a situation in which there was little social distance between themselves and the community. Mr. Webb, an outsider in the community, took steps that he hoped would allow him to avoid any contact with parents (e.g., making "B" his average grade instead of "C", trying to make his tests as easy as possible, etc.). The audience for which he performed was primarily the school administrators who were to make the decision to fire or retain him. In contrast, Mrs. Marsh seemingly took on the role of community representative and tried to raise the aspirations of the students, teach them desired norms of behavior, and so on, in addition to teaching them some history. The audience or "significant other" in this situation was the community. Finally, Mr. Franklin worked in a situation where there was considerable social distance between the school and the community segments it served. He framed his teaching practices in "professional" terms. He saw his relationship to the students as largely contractual and rule-bound. Content was determined by his professional judgments about the subject matter, and the curriculum was uniformly presented, with no special accommodations made on the basis of student characteristics. The relevant audience in this case could be described as the professional group of which Mr. Franklin saw himself as a member.

At Countryside, then, community influences were relatively unmediated by the district or school apparatuses: The individual teachers were forced to make their own accommodations to them. At Cityside, by contrast, teacher autonomy was greatly enhanced by a school district organization which fragmented the "community" served by the school.

The distribution of human resources also appears as a significant constraint arising from decisions made at the district level. For example, the availability of specialists to deal with particular problems (problem

students, curricular development, and so on) acts as a constraint on teacher practice. At Countryside, teachers had very little opportunity to tranfer problems inside the classroom into problems outside the classroom, or to obtain assistance from outsiders. Again, however, it is likely that even had such outside personnel resources been available, Mr. Webb and Mrs. Marsh would not have used them in the same way. Mr. Webb, for example, had no interest in changing his practice (he couldn't recall the topics of any of the inservice workshops he attended, and stated that none of them affected the way he taught) but did have an interest in avoiding the scrutiny or interest of administrators. Mrs. Marsh, by contrast, lamented the lack of administrative resources and a stable cadre of teachers.

Constraints on opportunities for informal interactions between teachers was also a significant feature of the Countryside setting. There were no student teachers at the school (because of the distance of the town from any school of education), no team or collaborative teaching, and no informal settings (except the crowded teachers' lounge) in which teachers could interact and learn from one another. The setting at Cityside was quite different. While collegial ties between teachers were not explicitly encouraged, the facts that subject matter areas were organized as departments and that teachers had at least the opportunity to talk with one another promoted the likelihood that teachers would learn from one another.

Evaluation systems are another form of constraint originating from decisions made at the district level. It is worth considering that from teachers' perspectives evaluation systems are less mechanisms for judging competence than systems for assigning "blameability" (Sjoberg, 1976). This is not necessarily a perversion of the aims of evaluative systems. Rather, it may be a inherent characteristic of evaluation in organizations that lack clear "technologies" linking actions to consequences (March & Olson, 1976).

From this perspective, evaluation systems are mechanisms that become important when pressures develop on organizations to change themselves. When organizations come under criticism, blameability systems function to assign blame for perceived failures. According to Mr. Franklin, the complicated evaluation system in the Morton had arisen from the reassignments of teachers brought about by desegregation: Administrators needed a mechanism to protect themselves when they began making personnel decisions. The unionized status of teachers in Morton also was a factor in the development of a more elaborate and routinized system of evaluation. Levels of organization functioned to give the teachers relative protection from supervisors. At Countryside, teachers had little power or leverage against the administration. There were few organizational layers separating teachers from parents or administrators. The blameability system was opaque--amounting almost to complete discretion for administrators in hiring and firing teachers. Thus, while Cityside was more bureaucratized and routinized than Countryside, there is a sense in which Mr. Franklin had much more autonomy and discretion than Mr. Webb and Mrs. Marsh. When constraints are explicit and well defined, it is easier to develop ways to cope with them than when they are ambiguous.

Constraints at the classroom level. Constraints can be differentially distributed across teachers and classrooms within the same school. The different capacities of Mr. Webb and Mrs. Marsh to command access to resources (e.g., selection of textbooks, requests for materials, etc.) illustrate part of this point. The school district they worked in was resource-poor, but processes at the school level, interacting with teacher characteristics, operated to differentially distribute these resource constraints. The school principal and district superintendent, acting as gatekeepers in charge of resource allocation, were able to favorably reward

Mrs. Marsh because of her status as a long-term resident teacher and active community member.

At the level of individual classrooms the resource poverty of the district had different consequences as it was mediated by the teachers' pedagogical beliefs and instructional systems. For Mr. Webb, for example, the paper shortage at the school was no constraint because his unit tests never exceeded one page and because his methods of teaching "map skills" required only that the students trace maps from their book on their own paper. Mrs. Marsh, however, felt the paper shortage as an immediate constraint because her conception of adequate testing required extensive written tests (similar to those used by Mr. Franklin) and because her conception of teaching "map skills" entailed using handouts and worksheets requiring students to identify geographical characteristics (thus, it was impossible for her to test or teach map skills as she desired).

Connections between constraints. The connections between the systems of constraints described above, and their influence on such factors as content selection and presentation, and classroom managment, is clearly complex. For example, the knowledge that constituted "history" was much more closely tied to the textbook at Countryside than at Cityside. Both Mr. Webb and Mrs. Marsh structured their classrooms around oral reading from the texts. Mr. Franklin relied more on audiovisual presentations and lectures based on information not contained in the texts. When the textbook was used in Mr. Franklin's class the emphasis was more on learning how to use school texts than on acquiring the information in the text.

There were clearly many factors that contributed to these differences: the two schools recruited different sorts of teachers. Resources (either material, such as audiovideo aids, or social, such as other teachers or resource personnel) were much more accessible to teachers at Cityside. The

potential for parental scrutiny and intervention differed at the two schools. The types of students differed, and this could have influenced the teachers' practices. Although all three classes showed similar distributions on standardized test scores, one could argue that the students' "cultural capital" (Dimaggio, 1982) (certainly that of the Anglos) at Cityside was much different than that of the students at Countryside.

However, although all of these factors may have influenced course content, it is not clear that they were determinant influences. Rather, it would appear that the ways constraints were perceived and responded to by teachers were influenced by the teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and commitments. At the same time, objective constraints influenced the nature of teachers' beliefs. Over the course of their teaching careers, teachers learned the practical limits of their autonomy and developed strategies for performance geared to assuring their survival within those constraints. Constraints and beliefs thus exist in an interactive or dialectical relationship. The remainder of this report looks more closely at this relationship.

The Interactions of Beliefs and Constraints

It is clear that constraints differ from setting to setting, and that their influence varies from teacher to teacher. As described above, some of this variance derives from mechanisms or decisions which differentially distribute the effects of the constraints. Much of the variance, however, seems to be the result of interactions between the beliefs of teachers and the constraints of their work settings. To look at these interactions more closely, a framework is needed for conceptualizing teachers' beliefs and the workplace characteristics which promote or impede the realization of these beliefs in practice.

Commitments. People have beliefs about many things. These beliefs may seem contradictory to others, they may be invoked in different contexts, they may be after-the-fact rationalizations of action (see Nespor, 1984a). When beliefs and actions are merely enumerated or described, as in the preceding sections of this report, they may appear idiosyncratic and unique for the individual described. However, it can be argued that actions and beliefs are linked in terms of general "frames" of reference. These frames may derive from the "audiences" to whom people gear their actions, or from issues or problems that people commonly confront in the course of their daily activities. People act consistently in terms of these frames of reference, though outsiders, analyzing their actions in terms of other frames of reference, may fail to see this consistency. Adherence to a frame of reference has been analyzed in terms of the concept of "commitment." Commitments, in Becker's (1970) analysis, involve the making of "side-bets." That is, one makes valued outcomes contingent upon consistent patterns of action in seemingly unrelated spheres of activity:

> Suppose that you are bargaining to buy a house; you offer sixteen thousand dollars, but the seller insists on twenty thousand. Now suppose that you offer your antagonist in the bargaining certified proof that you have bet a third party five thousand dollars that you will not pay more than sixteen thousand dollars for the house. Your opponent must admit defeat because you would lose money by raising your bid; you have committed yourself to pay no more than you originally offered.
>
> This commitment has been achieved by making a side bet. The committed person has acted in such a way as to involve other interests of his, originally extraneous to the action he is engaged in, directly in that action. By his own actions prior to the final bargaining session he has staked something of value to him, something originally unrelated to his present line of action, on being consistent in his present behavior. The consequences of inconsistency will be so expensive that inconsistency in his bargaining stance is no longer a feasible alternative. (p. 266)

Analyses of teachers' actions and beliefs in terms of the frames of reference or "side-bets" that give them consistency have revealed four ideal types of "commitment." Becker (1952, 1970) and Woods (1979) observed teachers whose primary interests were in retaining their jobs and continuing

to be teachers. Woods (1979) labeled this a "career-continuance" commitment and explained it in these terms:

> One of the major social system problems involving the commitment of actors is its continuance as an action system. This involves cognitive orientations bearing on profits and costs, and generally implies commitment to a social system role. The individual who makes a cognitive continuance commitment finds that what is profitable to him is bound up with his position in the organization, is contingent on his participating in the system. There is a profit in his remaining there and a deficit associated with leaving. Continuance is accompanied by 'sacrifice' and 'investment' processes. As a price of membership, members give up something, make sacrifices, which in turn increases commitment. So does investment, which promises future, which promises future gain in the organization. The member takes out shares in the proceeds of the organization and thus has a stake in its future. He channels his expectations along the organization's path, and the more he does so, the more he increases the distance between this and other possibilities. They grow more remote as his commitment grows larger. In this way the process is self-validating, self-reinforcing and frequently irreversible. (pp. 143-144)

More recently, Nias (1980) has identified three other forms of commitments among teachers. First, there are commitments to teaching as a "vocation" (vocation taken here in its European sense as a way of life which, as Max Weber put it, one lives <u>for</u> rather than <u>off of</u>). This form of commitment "involves a 'calling' to teach, and the examples include a missionary sense deriving from religion, or the promotion of other ideals, or 'caring' for children" (Woods, 1981, p. 291). A second form of commitment identified by Nias was commitment to teaching as a "profession": "a dedication to one's skill as a teacher, involving a continuous search to improve one's knowledge and abilities, and to do the job really well" (Nias, 1980). Finally, there was commitment to teaching as a marker of "identity": "teaching offered people the opportunities to be the sort of people they wanted to be" (Nias, 1980).

While these four types of commitment are ideal types, and the commitments of individual teachers may overlap to some extent, there are some basic lines of demarcation which are not easily straddled. Nias, for example, points out

that commitments to teaching as a "vocation" and a "profession" differ from commitments to teaching as a "career" of a focus of identity in that the former imply a "willingness of the individual to give scarce personal resources--time, energy, money--to one's work" (Woods, 1981, p. 292).

The three teachers described in this report clearly had different "commitments." For Mr. Webb, career continuance was the primary goal. The thread linking his practices was his desire to retain his job, and his sensitivity to what he perceived to be administrative expectations or demands reflects this commitment. This commitment produced a minimal, satisficing (March & Simon, 1958) behavior by which he attempted to routinize his instruction, removing the uncertainty and risk that might be produced were he to try to initiate optimizing or innovative classroom practices. Mrs. Marsh, by contrast, had a commitment to teaching as a vocation. Monetary concerns, she frequently reiterated, were unimportant to her. Nor were administrative interests or pressures influences on her teaching. Her commitment, as she saw it, was not to the school but to the children and the community. It followed that the emphasis of her teaching was on shaping the moral and behavioral characteristics of her students, inculcating ideals and aspirations, rather than transmitting a body of knowledge: Teaching children rather than subject matter, as she put it.

Finally, Mr. Franklin's commitment was to teaching as a "profession." He saw his role as that of an expert transmitter of knowledge, and concentrated his energies on improving his subject matter knowledge and his classroom teaching techniques. Unlike Mr. Webb, his aspirations involved moving out of the ranks of teaching into administration. He had in the past shown himself quite willing to leave teaching when admnistrative constraints interfered with him teaching as he saw fit. Unlike Mrs. Marsh, his investment or side-bet was

not in the moral improvement of his students or their communities. Instead, his commitment was to the professional ideal of doing one's job as expertly as possible.

The concept of "commitment" provides a general langauge for describing teachers' responses to their workplaces, but it has a number of shortcomings. First, there is no indication of why different commitments flourish in different schools, or why different teachers in the same school have different commitments. Secondly, the substantive behaviors flowing from a particular type of commitment could conceivably vary a great deal (e.g., not all teachers with career continuance commitments would teach like Mr. Webb; indeed, in some settings his behaviors would lessen his chances of continued employment). There are at least two avenues available for dealing with these issues. One is to examine the extent to which different forms of commitment are promoted or impeded by the task definitions and evaluation systems of schools. A second approach is to examine teachers' "strategies" of adaptation to school environments that may link forms of commitment with particular classroom practices.

The definition of teaching tasks by schools. Mitchell and Kerchner (1983) note that occupations can be distinguished in terms of the amounts of ambiguity or discretion entailed in the performance of the work:

> Some jobs are structured primarily through "rationalization." That is, specific tasks are preplanned (by either managers or the workers themselves) and then undertaken as a matter of routine enactment of standard operating procedures. . . . In other job settings, however, tasks are primarily adaptive--requiring accommodation to unexpected or unpredictable elements within the work situation. In this case, the task definitions cannot be embodied in a preplanned program. Instead, the emphasis must be on responding to conditions arising on the job, exercising proper judgment regarding what is needed, and maintaining intellectual and technical flexibility. (1983, p. 215)

Monitoring or evaluating systems also vary along two dimensions, corresponding to the stringency or closeness of evalution, and according to

whether evaluation focuses on the products of work or their producers (Mitchell & Kerchner, 1983):

> Some workers are subject to direct oversight through close supervision (such as assembly line workers) or through stringent reporting requirements (such as policemen). For other workers (such as architects or accountants) oversight is indirect. Preparation and skill--that is, the ability to perform the work--are the prime considerations. In the first case, the work itself is "inspected." In the second, the work often goes unexamined while workers are certified or "licensed" to perform the work on their own. (p. 216)

These characteristics are not "givens" defined by inherent features of occupations. They are, instead, largely determined by administrators and managers (see Braverman, 1974; Burawoy, 1979; Edwards, 1979). By either routinizing tasks or allowing discretion in their definition and by instigating particular sorts of evaluative systems, school administrators create conditions which limit the range of definitions that can be given to the teaching task in a given school. These task definitions, in turn, limit the types of commitments that teachers can make to teaching in these schools.

In settings where work is highly rationalized and subjected to stringent or direct evaluation, the teaching task is concretely and unambiguously specified and the "successful" teacher is the one who simply adheres to the programmed performance routines. Mitchell and Kerchner (1983) argue that teaching in such settings is best defined as "labor."

In settings where the goals of teaching are concretely specified, but knowledge of the procedures to attain these goals is supposed to inhere in the competencies of the teachers (the knowledge of techniques and ability to apply the techniques appropriately), teachers are evaluated less on actual specific performances of routines and more on the possession of the requisite skills. Mitchell and Kerchner (1983) call the task definition promoted in such settings "craft."

Mitchell and Kerchner (1983) use the label "professional" to describe the definition of teaching promoted in settings where the goals of teaching are conceived of as necessarily adaptive or ambiguous rather than routinized, and teachers are evaluated on the basis of their perceived competencies rather than on the products of their activities. Unlike "craft" work, where the task is essentially specified and the teacher is simply expected to know how to perform it, teaching as a "profession" assumes that the teacher both knows how to perform tasks, and how to define or decide what the tasks are and when they should be performed.

The parallels between the forms of "commitment" described earlier and the forms of organizationally promoted task definitions described above should be apparent. In settings where the definition of the teaching task is concretely prescribed and routinized, commitments to teaching as a "vocation" or a "profession" would be difficult if not impossible to maintain, while "career-continuance" commitments would be promoted. On the other hand, settings in which there were no clear organizational specifications of what should be taught or how it should be taught, teachers intent on simply retaining their jobs would face an ambiguous and difficult task.

But we have seen in preceding sections that schools can demonstrate great variability in they ways the define teaching tasks for different teachers. Consider the case of Countryside school. It would seem that "craft" and "professional" definitions of the teaching task would have been difficult to promote for two reasons. First, the lack of curricular and pedagogical specialists or experts in the school district administration created a situation in which there were no administrative personnel competent to define course content or the skills needed by teachers. The principal at Countryside, for example, stated that his own teaching experience had been in industrial arts and that he felt unable to evaluate the teaching skills of

teachers in other areas. The second factor militating against "craft" or professional definitions of teaching was the lack of discretion that school officials had in selecting teachers: Teachers could not be screened for the possession of skills and competencies; instead, administrators hired the teachers that they could get.

Thus, at Countryside, the organizational structure of the district and the school would seemed to have encouraged a definition of the teaching task as "labor"--and to a great extent this was the case. However, characteristics peculiar to the Countryside setting made it suitable both for teachers with career continuance commitments and to teachers with commitments to teaching as a vocation. Recall that at Countryside the main characteristic distinguishing teachers was their membership in the community. Task definitions thus referred not only to forms of pedagogical practice but also to the ways the teachers defined their relationships to the students and the school. Teaching as "labor" was defined by teachers such as Mr. Webb as drilling students on course materials, sticking close to the assigned texts, and keeping order and administering discipline within the classroom. The teachers for whom this task definition was invoked were the transient teachers, those who lived outside the community or who could be expected to stay at the school for only a short period of time. The task definition represented the minimal level of practice acceptable from these teachers, and it was in terms of this definition that teachers were monitored and evaluated.

"Professionalism," by contrast, was defined as a willingness to make sacrifices and go beyond the explicit requirements of the job: making a commitment to the community and its way of life. ("Professionalism" defined in terms of pedagogical expertise was impeded because of the conservatism of

the district and the unwillingness of the School Board and school administrators to invest in curricular innovations.) This task definition was invoked for those teachers who were "settlers," who had made long term commitments to the school and community. The actual classroom practices of these teachers were not closely monitored. The teachers were in fact given considerable discretion (more than their counterparts) in their practice. The forms of "commitment" encouraged at Countryside were thus "career continuance" (for the transient teachers who looked upon teaching at countryside mainly as a job) and "vocationalism" (for the settlers, who looked upon teaching at Countryside as a way to improve the community).

At Cityside, the substance of task definitions differed sharply from those at Countryside. First, the district was able to be selective about the teachers it hired. It also possessed curricular coordinators and a highly routinized system of evaluation. Second, unlike Countryside, the substance of task definitions did refer to pedagogical practices rather than to diffuse relations to the school and community. This produced a setting in no particular task definition was clearly promoted, but in which certain forms of commitment--for example, commitment to teaching as a vocation--were impeded. Mr. Franklin's "professional" commitment, for example, centered on subject matter and classroom management expertise. Because of the diversity of communities served by Cityside and because of the social distance between teachers and communities, the form of commitment evidenced by Mrs. Marsh would have been difficult for Mr. Franklin to sustain.

Teacher Strategies

The preceding discussion suggests that teachers frame their actions in terms of their commitments so that they will act consistently within some frame of reference. The kinds of commitments they demonstrate may be linked to the organization of the school environment, but this linkage is an

ambiguous one. The major source of this ambiguity is the fact that teachers' perceptions of school environment constraints are guided by the nature of their commitments. That is, commitments focus the attention of teachers to different aspects of the school environment. This selective focusing of attention is a necessary adaptive strategy. (However, adaptations are not always "adaptive." As the notion of "selective inertia" from evolutionary theory reminds us, those who become maximally adapted to a specific enviroment are liable to perish when that environment changes.)

Teachers work in unstable, emergent environments. Some of this instability is built into the very framework of schooling: The groups of students and parents with whom teachers deal change from year to year, new textbooks are periodically adopted, curricular guidelines are revised, and so on. Administrators and co-workers also change, though with a frequency which varies from school to school. Teachers may also have different preparations from one year to the next--or different preparations within the same year. In a strict sense many teachers teach more than one subject matter area. Teachers also have <u>careers</u>. They teach at different schools with different characteristics at different times, although the frequency of this horizontal mobility may vary from district to district, or from one region of the country to another.

All of the points described above (and many other aspects of instability and uncertainty in teaching could be added to the list) are commonplaces, but the implication of these characteristics, when taken as a whole, is rarely acknowledged. For if teaching environments are multiple and shifting, then the knowledge base of teaching cannot be defined merely in terms of content and pedagogical skills. It must also include knowledge of how to adapt or fit teaching practices to new contexts whose parameters are not known in advance.

As Bransford, Franks, Perfetto, and Vye (1984) have recently argued, the aims of instruction should not be merely to turn "novices" into "experts," for the concept of expertise assumes a stable and established task environment. Instead, instruction must aim at creating "intelligent novices" who can redefine or reinvent "expertise" to fit new and unforeseen circumstances. The concept of "strategies" is offered as a tool for examining the ways teachers attempt to focus their knowledge and skills to particular contextual demands. This concept has already been introduced into the literature. For example, Zeichner (1983, drawing on Lacey, 1977) identifies three forms of teacher strategies:

> First, internalized adjustment refers to a response where individuals comply with the authority figure's definition of a situation and believe these constraints to be for the best. This strategy indicates those situations where an individual willingly develops into the kind of person the situation demands and socialization entails both behavioral conformity and value commitment.
>
> On the other hand, strategic compliance refers to those instances where individuals comply with the constraints posed by a situation, but retain private reservations about doing so. This strategy implies that individuals do not act in ways consistent with their underlying beliefs, and conformity is essentially an adaptive response without the corresponding value basis on which the behavior presumably rests. Finally, the strategy of strategic redefinition refers to those situations where changes are made by individuals who do not possess the formal power to do so. These individuals attempt to widen the range of acceptable behaviors in a situation and to introduce new and creative elements into a social setting. (p. 41)

There are some problems with these definitions. First, they seem to assume that school constraints and school values are monolithic and undifferentiated. Instead, as this report suggests, constraints are differentially distributed within schools, and schools may lack homogeneous and well defined value systems. Second, they seem to assume that "authority figures" always promote forms of practice, that such preferences are concretely articulated, and that the preferences are necessarily relevant to teachers' practice. (These assumptions probably derive from the fact that both Lacey and Zeichner were studying student teachers, who are conceivably

more closely scrutinized and controlled than other teachers.) There may, however, be no real pressures on teachers to internalize, comply with, or redefine administrative policies --there may be no policies, they may be vague or irrelevant to the teachers' goals, they may lack enforcement sanctions. An alternative way of conceptualizing strategies is to distinguish them in terms of the aspects of the school environment that teachers attend to. This is the approach taken in the following analyses of the three teachers described in this study.

Mr. Webb's case: Organization-focused strategies. There is a common cultural assumption that games are played to be won, that activities are undertaken with the aim of gaining the optimal possible outcome in terms of some system of goals. Game theorists and analysts of decision making have questioned this assumption, arguing, for example, that in many circumstances people employ mini-max strategies, or "satisfice" rather than attempt to optimize outcomes. However, one can go even further and point out that some games are not played for outcomes at all. Or rather, the aim of some games is to keep the game itself from reaching a resolution. These are called "existential games" (Slobodkin, 1968).

Mr. Webb's strategy for accommodating to new or unstable settings was to play just this sort of game. His position in the school organization, as a coach/teacher, was inherently unstable, for the basic criterion to be used in retaining or firing him was the performance of the atheletic teams he coached. The system essentially offered him no rewards for performance in the classroom. Early in his career, when he was on an upwardly mobile vector--progressively assuming more important coaching positions in larger schools--his optimizing activities had been confined to the coaching sphere, and he had developed the habit of doing the concretely specified, minimally acceptable

amount of work in the classroom. When his coaching career began to fade (hastening the frequency with which he moved from school to school), his strategy shifted to trying to show himself an acceptable classroom teacher and he had at one point tried unsuccessfully to stop coaching altogether and simply teach. Since his early experiences (and his collegiate training) had de-emphasized teaching skills and content knowledge, his strategy for successful teaching became one of focusing his attention on cues from the school and district administration about what the desired practice of teaching was in the particular school. His goal was neither to optimize the learning of his students, nor was there any indication that he was "internally adjusting" to administrative values or "strategically complying" with administrative demands. He neither subjectively accepted that administrative ideas about teaching were right, nor did he simply accede to these ideas while secretly harboring contradictory opinions: He just didn't care. He simply did what he thought he had to do to keep his job.

Is existential game-playing rare or unique? Mr. Webb was certainly in a relatively unusual position, although his practices seem to resemble those of other coach/teachers described by teachers at all three sites in this study, and of coach/teachers observed in an urban school in another city in the region (see Nespor, 1983). However, it is possible to extract general features of his situation that might exist on a wide scale, and which might deserve more attention in future research.

First, the degree to which the tasks of teaching are explicitly and concretely defined by the school organization may influence the extent to which a teacher ends up playing an existential game. Mr. Webb, of course, simply interpreted the comments by administrators as specifications of permissible practices. But as schooling becomes more routinized and rationalized, with curriculum, pedagogy, and even pacing defined by

administratively instituted systems of instruction, it may become more and more difficult for teachers to invest in or place side-bets on their classroom success. The only appropriate norm of rationality becomes that of satisfying one's superiors.

A second consideration is the availability of alternative avenues of employment for teachers. Mr. Webb had no marketable skills outside of his teaching credential. The teachers who have few work options outside of teaching may be more likely to develop commitments to "career continuance" and to play existential games to keep their jobs. Research suggests that more able teachers may leave teaching much earlier than the less able. The implication drawn from such findings is that teaching should be made more attractive to those who can get jobs in other fields. However, a more important implication may be that some of those who stay in teaching do so simply because they have no options in other fields, and that this situation may promote patterns of actions which aim merely at keeping one's job.

Existential game-playing as exemplified by Mr. Webb may be an extreme, limiting case, but the general features of his situation may not be unique. No amount of training in content or teaching skills can have a dependable or predictable effect on classroom instruction if schools create barriers to the exercise of discretion by teachers and if the primary reward to teachers for classroom performance is simply a continuation of their jobs.

Mrs. Marsh: Client-focused strategies. Mr. Webb's strategy for dealing with new or emergent situations was to focus on the prescriptions and proscriptions of the school organization he was working for: He attempted to determine what concrete patterns of action were required of him and then followed these patterns as closely as he could. Mrs. Marsh, by contrast, focused on the particular needs that she perceived in her clients, both the

students and the community. She was, as she put it, teaching children, not content. She went so far as to state that she felt that she could be just as effective in attaining her goals through teaching other content areas (math, which she had previously taught, or English, for which she was also certified). Content was merely a vehicle for inculcating in her students the attitudes, aspirations, and norms of behavior that she considered appropriate or needed.

This is not to say that Mrs. Marsh did not attend to content or consider it important, but it does seem that her attention was not focused on finding new or innovative ways to present content or shape classroom interaction, nor were her classroom tasks designed to foster higher level thinking skills. But to frame the issue this way is somewhat misleading. As a client-focused adapter, Mrs. Marsh was attempting to provide the students not with knowledge of historical events but with reading skills (as her diagnosis of the students led her to believe that this was needed) and behavioral norms (such as those needed to participate in orderly turn-taking in reading aloud from the book).

Administrative or organizational constraints and pressures thus had a minimal influence on her instructional practice. One could call her a "strategic complier" in the sense that, for example, she gave the students a 100-item multiple choice test for a final exam, even though she felt this was not an adequate measure of the students' knowledge, because she knew that such "objective" measures of competence were expected by administrators and parents. But one could also consider her a "strategic redefiner" in the sense that she defined the real curriculum of her classes as behavioral norms and attitudes.

Mrs. Marsh's "vocational" commitment to teaching--her almost missionary sense of promoting ideals and "caring" for children--was closely related to

the position of Countryside school in the community. Both the smallness of the setting and the small social distance between school and community allowed Mrs. Marsh to act as a social influence on students outside of the school as well as in the classroom: She saw the students outside of school, taught some of them in Sunday school, and was able to follow their progress through high school.

There was a process of reciprocal reinforcement in place: Mrs. Marsh's vocational idea of teaching pushed her towards a close personal relationship to the students and the community, while the closeness of school and community allowed this attitude to flourish. In some respects, then, her position was unusual. It is difficult to imagine such a vocational commitment from a teacher in Mr. Franklin's position: where students come from a great diversity of backgrounds, all of them sharply separated from the teacher's own social position and background. But the social closeness of school and community may not be the only process at work in engendering or allowing vocational commitments to flourish. Woods (1981) notes that in Nias's (1980) study of primary teachers and Lacey's (1977) study of student teachers, vocational and professional commitments predominated, while in his own study of secondary teachers, the most common form of commitment was to "career continuance." What may be at work here is the fact that client-focused strategies for dealing with emergent environments are only workable in settings where there is an opportunity for extensive and stable communication between teacher and clients: for example, in primary schools where teachers deal with the same group of children for the entire day over the course of a year and in schools where teachers can develop close linkages to the communities they serve. (It would be interesting, in the case of Lacey's

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research, to know whether or how long the student teachers were able to maintain vocational commitments in different types of settings.)

Mr. Franklin: Profession-focused strategies. It is commonly argued that teaching is not a profession (e.g, Hargreaves, 1980; Jackson, 1968; Lortie, 1975). But two very distinct issues are sometimes conflated in such arguments. The common sociological definition of a profession (Freidson, 1970; Hughes, 1965) focuses on the power of occupational groups to monopolize (with the backing of state-enforced sanctions) the legitimate application of certain bodies of knowledge, to monitor and police themselves, to control access to their ranks, and so on. From this perspective it is indeed difficult to make the case for teaching as a profession. However, the notion of expertise is something quite different. Groups may possess a great deal of esoteric and specialized knowledge about some area of activity, and yet lack the social power that defines professional status. Conversely, individuals with "professional" status may lack true expertise in their occupations. In studies of teaching, "professionalism" and "expertise" are sometimes confused. Jackson (1968), for example argues that:

> One of the most notable features of teacher talk is the absence of a technical vocabulary. Unlike professional encounters between doctors, lawyers, garage mechanics, and astrophysicists, when teachers talk together almost any reasonably intelligent adult can listen in and comprehend what is being said. Occasionally familiar words are used in a special sense, and the unitiated listener may be momentarily puzzled by the mention of 'units,' or 'projects,' or 'curriculum guides,' or 'word attack skills,' but it is unlikely he will encounter many words that he has never heard before or even those with a specialized meaning . . . The absence of technical terms is related to another characteristic of teachers' talk: its conceptual simplicity. Not only do teachers avoid elaborate words, they also seem to shun elaborate ideas. (pp. 143-144)

Lortie (1975) makes a similar argument:

> The preparation of teachers does not seem to result in the analytic turn of mind one finds in other occupations whose members are trained in colleges and universities. One notes, for example, that few teachers . . . connect their knowledge of scientific method with practical teaching matters. One hears little mention ofthe disciplines of observation, comparison, rules of inference, sampling, testing hypotheses

through treatment, and so forth. Scientific modes of reasoning and pedagogical practice seem compartmentalized. (p. 231)

Berlack and Berlack (1981) have recently questioned the logic of these arguments:

> Though it is widely presumed that experts in flute playing are flutists, Professors Lortie and Jackson and many professional educationalists assume that the experts in teaching are not the teachers but scientifically-trained administrators, or educational scholars who study schooling scientifically.
>
> We are especially wary of 'scientific' attributions of irrationality leveled at low-status groups. . . . The quotations offered by Philip Jackson to support his simplicity of thought hypothesis can easily be interpreted as teachers' proclivities to view their schooling problems more contextually than educational researchers.
>
> Although Lortie studies the recruitment and socialization patterns of teachers, their career and work rewards, and what teachers say about teaching . . . he does not study what teachers actually do in classrooms. His failure to collect systematic information on teachers' classroom activities and how teachers construct and justify these activities, does not, in our view, permit him to draw conclusions about how rational, analytic or simple-minded teachers are as they actually perform their profession. Lortie attributes teachers' failures to share their information with each other to the absence of an appropriate technical vocabulary. Is it not shallow, if not arrogant, however, to assume that the measure of persons' professionalism is their use of technical language? (pp. 235-236)

Posession of a specialized language is not, in fact, a clear indication of expertise; and specialized terminologies are related to professionalism only in the sense that, historically, professions have used esoteric lexicons and abstruse language forms as means of asserting their claims to monopolies over bodies of knowledge (Heath, 1979). Specialized terminologies and metalinguistic awareness thus function primarily to set the professional or expert off from his or her clientele. On this point it is worth noting that teachers interact with multiple clienteles with very different characteristics: educational researchers, school administrators, parents, and, most importantly, children. If one analyzes teachers' speech with their primary audience, their students, it is clear that vis-a-vis this audience their language is indeed highly specialized, and that it functions to control

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the distribution and application of knowledge in much the same way as a doctor's speech to a patient (see e.g., Edwards & Furlong, 1978).

Finally, the point should be made that one reason teachers' language seems unprofessional and unanalytical to educational researchers, is that, in a sociological sense, teachers and educational researchers represent different professions "competing" for control over the domain of classroom instruction. Teachers do not lack a technical vocabulary (parents and students certainly wouldn't think so), they merely have a different technical vocabulary than researchers.

This rather long digression is by way of introducing the third strategy of teacher adaptation to emergent contexts identified in this study: the profession-focused strategy of Mr. Franklin. By "profession-focused" I mean that Mr. Franklin conceived of teaching as a set of specialized instructional skills through the use of which one created a setting for learning. Mr. Franklin dealt with new contexts by developing skills to create an autonomous context within the classroom, insulated and buffered from changing conditions in student clientele, school organization, and teaching colleagues. It follows that, although his classroom was by far the richest of the three in terms of the amount, variability, and quality of content presented, Mr. Franklin felt that the key to teaching was not knowing content, but knowing the special pedagogical skills that allowed one to manage a classroom and present materials effectively:

> If you haven't managed to get them in their seat and have them be looking at you then there's no way that you're going to present the content to them . . . the legislature says they're going to allow uncertified math teachers to teach math. Good luck. I mean, you can know a lot of math, but if you don't have some sort of feeling for [management] you aren't going to teach anybody . . . recently there are a lot of people who have downgraded the teacher training--the education courses. I've had some that have deserved to be downgraded, but I've had some darn good methods courses in the years that I have been in college and I learned a lot about the presentation of material. I didn't learn enough . . . about management [but] there are lots of things that I've learned on my own in

> the ten years that I've been doing it . . . the idea that what makes a teacher a good teacher is the depth of their content [knowledge] is just fallacious from the word go . . . [Content] is a lot less important than most people seem to think.

The profession-focused strategy of Mr. Franklin had led him to search out new methods over the years--learning from other teachers, attending workshops and implementing new ideas, writing curricula for the school district. Though he had been teaching 10 years, he continued to experiment with new techniques.

The sources of Mr. Franklin's profession-focused strategy seem to lie in his career through the educational system. He took a Bachelors degree in a Liberal Arts field before he ever considered becoming a teacher. He thus approached his teacher education program first as a successful and experienced college student and second as someone about 10 years older than most of the other prospective teachers in the program. In the first instance, experience in another field of study (one generally considered a professional field) may have provided him with different conceptual frameworks than those of many entering teachers. Lortie (1975) and others have suggested that many of the ideas that prospective teachers hold about the definition of the teacher role, their desires for practical recipes for action rather than theoretical knowledge, and so on, derive from their long years of "participant observation" as students in which they form tacit assumptions about teaching. What seems to have happened in Mr. Franklin's case is that exposure to another professional field, one which he had little prior knowledge of or experience with, taught him to think of the knowledge that constitutes expertise in a different way than many other teachers. This is not to say that other teachers with different assumptions lack expertise. Rather, it may be that they lack "meta-expertise"--they do not, as Mr. Franklin did, make expertise an object of conscious attention.

The second unusual characteristic of Mr. Franklin's teaching career--the fact that he entered the classroom in his late 20s--has an unclear relevance. He himself felt, on the basis of his experience as a cooperating teacher with young student teachers, that his age was a very important factor in his lack of anxiety as a beginning teacher, and the fact that he had little difficulty from the start in establishing an orderly classroom.

Finally, it should be noted that school and district contexts, or at least Mr. Franklin's experiences with different contexts, may have had an influence on his strategy of adaptation. First, on the district level, there were audiences for the demonstration of expertise. Unlike Countryside school, where the individual teacher was, in effect, the district's expert on his or her course content, Cityside's district had curriculum coordinators, curriculum-focused workshops, curriculum guidelines, and other teachers who taught the same content. There were, in short, other people to talk to about the expertise of teaching, and structured opportunities to talk to them. The fact that Mr. Franklin not only had team-taught courses but also had taught in an open-classroom situation at another school, had been important sources of information for him. It goes without saying that these are not sufficient conditions for promoting a profession-focused strategy, but they may be necessary preconditions for it. It is difficult to imagine Mr. Franklin teaching for long, or teaching in the same way, in a district like Countryside's. His teaching was, in short, the product of the interaction of his background, commitments, and the workplace contexts in which he operated.

Implications for Future Research

This report suggests that three aspects of teaching deserve further attention. First, schools and school districts differ in very important ways. This fact is recognized by economists and sociologists, but it has received less than adequate attention from classroom researchers and researchers on

teaching. Indeed, it can be argued that when one does "classroom research" or "research on teaching" important and untested assumptions are being made about the autonomy of these areas. It is just as true to say that teachers teach in schools or school districts as to say that they teach in classrooms, and one should not make a priori assumptions about which context, if any, is of primary importance in determing how a teacher teaches.

Secondly, teachers, at least in some regions of the country, teach many different grade levels and course contents in different schools across their careers. Teachers' career paths have received almost no attention in educational research, yet they may be extremely important determinants of teaching practice. There is a tendency in research on teaching to think of teachers as passing through "phases" or "stages"--pre-service, induction, inservice and so on--but such distinctions are mere reflections of the administrative organization of the teacher education apparatus and have no necessary relationship to teachers' felt experiences or demarcations relevant to research questions. Each phase (especially "inservice") could be exploded into many distinct processes and subphases. Just as importantly, the linkages between "phases" have been ignored: How do schools recruit and select teachers? How do teachers with certain kinds of characteristics and skills end up in schools with particular characteristics? What determines when teachers move from school to school or into or out of teaching altogether? If any credence at all is given to the notion that workplace characteristics influence teaching practices, then the answers to such questions may be very important.

Finally, the interactions between teachers' beliefs, commitments, and strategies, and the school contexts in which they work, require further exploration. Teacher practices are not simply the products of their

knowledge, skills, and interests, nor are they mechanistically determined by workplace constraints. Further research is needed to clarify both conceptually and empirically how teachers' beliefs and school contexts produce classroom practices. The present report is intended as one small step in this direction.

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Table 1

Characteristics of Areas Served by Cityside School

	ETHNCITY%			MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD	% GRADUATED H.S.
	Anglo	Black	Mex-Am.	INCOME	
TOTAL CITY	76%	12%	19%	$14,700	75%
AERA A					
TRACT 1	95%	.6%	3%	$26,700	96%
TRACT 2	92%	2%	4%	$16,000	94%
TRACT 3	96%	1%	2%	$45,800	96%
AERA B					
TRACT 1	21%	64%	14%	$ 9,600	56%
TRACT 2	5%	83%	12%	$ 7,800	42%
TRACT 3	.9%	87%	12%	$ 6,700	41%
AERA C	16%	19%	65%	$12,000	35%

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census

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